

# A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIA

By  
LAWRENCE WOLFE

NICHOLSON & WATSON  
Number One  
Craven House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2

Printed by Love & Malcomson, Ltd., Redhill, Surrey.

# CONTENTS

THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE . . . . .	vii
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	xiii
CHAP. . . . .	PAGE
I. EARLY HISTORY OF THE SLAVONIC TRIBES . . . . .	21
II. THE PRINCIPALITY OF KIEV . . . . .	26
III. DECLINE OF KIEV AND RISE OF OTHER PRINCIPALITIES . . . . .	31
IV. TARTAR RULE IN RUSSIA—THE RISE OF MOSCOW . . . . .	36
V. IVAN THE TERRIBLE . . . . .	45
VI. THE PERIOD OF TROUBLE — BORIS GODUNOV . . . . .	52
VII. MICHAEL AND ALEXIS . . . . .	59
VIII. PETER THE GREAT AND HIS IMMEDIATE SUCCESSORS . . . . .	66
IX. CATHERINE II — EXPANSION OF SERF- DOM AND ARISTOCRATIC PRIVILEGES . . . . .	78
X. ALEXANDER I AND THE “ HOLY ALLIANCE—NICHOLAS I . . . . .	88
XI. ALEXANDER II — LIBERATION OF THE SERFS . . . . .	100
XII. NICHOLAS II — OLIGARCHY OF GRAND DUKES AND PLEHVE WAR AND REVOLUTION . . . . .	111
XIII. THE END OF TSARISM AND THE RISE OF SOVIET RUSSIA . . . . .	123
XIV. FORMATION OF THE U.S.S.R. — THE PERIOD OF RECONSTRUCTION . . . . .	131
XV. FOREIGN POLICY, 1921—1941 . . . . .	143
XVI. LITERATURE, SCIENCE, ART . . . . .	157





## THE COUNTRY AND THE PEOPLE

### THE COUNTRY

Russia covers approximately one sixth of the earth's land surface, and is therefore the largest single country on the globe.

It projects within the Arctic Circle in the North, while in the South the climate is hot enough to grow grapes, oranges and lemons, tea, cotton, etc. The longest West-East distance is about 6,000 miles. West to East, Russia includes the greater part of Eastern Europe, the whole of Siberia, and considerable regions of Central Asia. For those who like to compare the size of one country with another, here is a colossal figure: Russia's total area is in the vicinity of 9,000,000 square miles.

The country as a whole is a vast plain. High plateaux and mountain ranges are met with only in Asiatic Russia. In European Russia the mountains are all on the circumference: the Yaila chain in the Crimea, the Caucasus on the south-western, and the much lower Urals on the eastern boundary. The low Valdai Hills, which have figured so prominently in the present war, are in the north-west.

The most characteristic thing in Russian geography are the rivers. In European Russia they nearly all flow southwards, originating in the extensive marsh and lake region in the North, which includes Lake Ladoga, the largest lake in Europe. These rivers—the Dniester, Dnieper, Don, Volga—were the main routes of Russian history and also represent, with their many tributaries and intersecting canals, a very considerable proportion of the Russian system of communications to-day. In addition, of course, they play an important part in the electrification of the country. The great Siberian rivers mostly flow northwards into the Arctic Ocean and this, naturally, limits their usefulness.

The dominant feature of the landscape over thousands of miles of Northern Russia and Siberia are the forests: firs, pines, silver birches, etc. Accordingly, the Russians for many centuries largely lived in, as well as by the forest, and timber-built houses were the rule rather than the exception everywhere.

Below the forest belt in European Russia stretches the belt of fertile "black soil" which was once the granary of Europe and which has for long been coveted by the Germans. This territory is approximately twice as large as the whole of France and the soil is among the richest in the world.

Agriculture always was, and still remains, by far the largest Russian industry, and agricultural production was always impressive, even in the

lean years. The frequently recurring terrible famines of the past were due sometimes to climatic causes, but perhaps more often to primitive methods of cultivation or breakdowns in the transport system: for the less fertile North had to be fed from the South. However, the avoidable causes have been eliminated under Soviet rule, and there is now no normal probability of a recurrence of famines in the land of the "black soil."

There has also been a tremendous improvement in the exploitation of Russia's unlimited natural resources, which were almost completely neglected in the past. Potentially, Russia may be said to be the richest country in the world and potentiality is rapidly being translated into actuality. There are the vast forests, an inexhaustible source of timber, furs and other products. The Russian river and sea fisheries are amazingly rich and yield many varieties of fish that are unknown in the west. According to expert estimates Russia's "buried" oil reserves are larger than those of the rest of the world put together. She also has large deposits of coal, as well as of all kinds of metals. Russian gold output to-day is already the second largest in the world, although many existing seams are not yet in production.

In brief, Russia possesses an abundance of nearly everything required to make herself self-supporting and virtually independent of the world markets.

## THE PEOPLE

Russia has approximately 180 million inhabitants, representing about one twelfth of the entire human race. They comprise more than fifty different nationalities speaking scores of different languages and dialects.

The most striking thing about the Russian people—and here we must confine ourselves roughly to the Slavonic element—is that they all seem to possess a powerful physique. Even the average Russian peasant and worker is capable of feats of endurance that sound simply incredible to Western ears. Many such feats on the part of members of the Red Army—including women!—have been reported in the Press or reproduced on the screen and have been received by many people in this country with some incredulity. But no one who knows the Russians is surprised. Perhaps it is a case of the survival of the fittest. The Russian past is so full of famines, epidemics, wars and risings, that none but the toughest could survive.

As to the Russian character and temperament, the average Westerner's ideas are derived from gloomy Russian novels, stories of the horrible pogroms of Tsarist days, superficial observation of Russian exiles (of the extreme Left before 1914 and of the extreme Right after 1917), and, last but not least, from tendentious reports.

Actually, these impressions are as erroneous as they can be, and certainly have no general application. The mass of the Russian people are far from gloomy. On the contrary, a steady cheerfulness,

even in adversity, is a common characteristic. Nor are they cruel. As anyone who has lived or travelled in Russia will testify, the ordinary Russian is kindly, hospitable and sociable and intensely human. In addition, he is governed by a deep honesty in his dealings with others, despite the corruption of which he was the victim for centuries. Further, he is wonderfully co-operative: a quality rooted in the whole history of his people. The Russian of any type—we cannot speak of classes to-day—has few “civilized” inhibitions, such as reserve or self-consciousness and he is a jolly and always interesting—and interested!—companion to anyone who does not resent natural frankness in all things. All Russians enjoy conversation and have made an art of it, though not in the impersonal, evasive sense; their conversation always has a content.

Curiously enough, of all foreigners the Russian gets on best with Englishmen or, rather, Britons. There is ample historical evidence to that effect, for since the first Englishman landed in Russia in the sixteenth century Englishmen and Scotsmen sometimes played an important role in the political, economic and social life of Russia and records of the experiences and impressions of many of them show that the Russians always preferred the Briton to the German and other foreigners. The readiness of the Russian to make friends with the Briton has also been confirmed again and again in recent decades by Britons who have lived or travelled in Russia.

The explanation, of course, is that despite all the external differences and the difference in outlook, there are a great many fundamental similarities between the British and Russian character. No doubt, this will become increasingly clear with the development of Anglo-Russian friendship.

## INTRODUCTION

THIS booklet is written in order to supply what in the present circumstances appears to be a rather remarkable deficiency: the lack of a popular brief outline of Russian history from the earliest times down to this fateful year of 1942, when the Red Army is delivering one shattering blow after another at Hitler's mighty and "invincible" military machine.

There is a superabundance of books and pamphlets dealing with the Russia of the past twenty five years and constituting an almost day by day record and appraisal of events and conditions in that vast country ever since November, 1917, when amidst the first world catastrophe of our generation the Bolsheviks seized the reins of government; but among them all there is not a single publication, at least as far as the present writer has been able to discover, that tells the whole story of Russia, from beginning to end.

Yet such a presentation is more than ever necessary to-day, when so much of the existing literature on Soviet Russia has become out of date or at any rate inadequate.

This literature ranges in tendency from blind, unreasoning hostility to grudging admissions, and from judicious impartiality to fanatical worship, but while it reflects faithfully enough the very much divided attitudes of the British people towards Soviet Russia, from which it sprang and which it helped to foster, it is already largely behind the times. For since June, 1941, when Soviet Russia became our Ally—and what an Ally!—there has been a general revision of attitudes.

It is safe to say that Soviet Russia's former enemies among us, even the most implacable, have been shocked out of their antagonism by the utterly unexpected revelation of the greatness of her people and their leaders. It is also more than probable that many of her most impartial judges have by now discovered that it is impossible to remain too strictly impartial in the presence of the greatest miracle of modern times. And there is some evidence to show that even the idolaters of Bolshevism and all its works have been sobered out of their romantic flights of fancy by the wondrous reality of their idol's achievement in the cause of civilization.

What remains in the mind of the average Briton is wholehearted admiration of Soviet Russia as an Ally and, beyond that, an ever deepening interest in the stupendous social experiment that has been proceeding in that sixth of the globe for the last twenty five years.

This interest is no longer of a partisan character. It extends to all classes and is based on the realization that, as M. Maisky, Soviet Ambassador



in London, wrote in the first issue of "Soviet War News," "not only the successful conclusion of the war against our common enemy, but the post-war reconstruction of Europe will depend very considerably upon close co-operation between the Soviet Union and Great Britain," and that "the friendship which has been born and baptized in war must and will be continued in peace." And as we know, these sentiments are shared by the British Government.

Viewed from the angle of this new kind of interest, which really amounts to a readiness, an eagerness on the part of the British people to *understand*, much of the existing literature on Soviet Russia, and particularly the hostile portion, is already dead and buried; but even the sympathetic and objective rest is of less value as a source of true enlightenment for the average Briton than it might be because, at best, it presents Soviet Russia against the background of the country's immediate pre-Communist history, and not against that wider historical background without which a true understanding of the Russia of the last twenty five years is impossible.

For, obviously, the triumph of Bolshevism in Russia in 1917, together with all its subsequent successes and failures, cannot have been the outcome of a political situation, however opportune, or of the misery and degradation created by tyrannous misrule for one or two generations.

It would be difficult to determine all the precise factors that were involved in lifting Bolshevism

into power, keeping it there for a quarter of a century, and enabling it despite the most terrible handicaps to build up a brave new world for a twelfth of the earth's population. But it is quite certain that the chief and decisive factor was represented by the personal qualities of the Russian people—their capacity for deep, unbounded, sacrificial faith, their indomitable courage, their almost incredible endurance, their ready sense for practical realities—and also by those faults that constituted a considerable part of the handicaps. And these qualities and faults were the product not of anything that the Russian people had experienced in their own or their fathers' life-time but of a thousand years of history, just as the character of the British people is not the result of anything that happened during the past few decades, but of centuries of development.

Thus it is only through a knowledge of the whole history of the Russian people that we can hope to understand Soviet Russia with the kind of understanding that must be the foundation of friendship between her and the British people; to understand not only that which has evoked our admiration to-day, but also that which repelled us in the past; to understand how she accomplished the apparently impossible in 1917-1922 by surviving defeat, physical and economic exhaustion, as well as the onslaughts of powerful internal and external enemies and how she managed to come out of it all with sufficient stamina and resolution left to raise a mighty social structure in the short space

of twenty years, building so solidly and impregnably that the mechanized Teutonic hordes have failed to shake it; and to understand, too, though not necessarily to approve, the killings and deportations, as well as the "disestablishment" of the Orthodox Church, which the leaders of Russia considered as inevitable.

A knowledge of the Russian past is also necessary if we are to establish a fair standard of comparison as to the progress of the Soviet experiment. Her worshippers contend that it is unjust and illogical to compare Moscow with London or the Russian village with the English village. Actually, that is the only just and logical standard of comparison, *provided* it is placed on an historical basis. It might be formulated in this way: Considering the past histories of both the Moscow and the London of 1917, and considering their respective situations during the succeeding five years, which of the two has made a greater advance? And, on the same premises, we might also ask: Which has advanced further — economically, culturally and socially — the Russian peasant or the English farm labourer? Indeed, the same question might be posed in connection with the liberties which we in this country rightly hold dear and which we consider worth fighting and dying for: Have not the common people of Soviet Russia, during a period of dire emergency and transition, achieved a measure of liberty which their fathers would not have dared to dream of?

At all events, the Russia of to-day must be viewed

in the light of the Russia not only of yesterday, but of all the yesterdays.

The following pages contain no more than the bare bones of the story, so to speak, but an endeavour has been made to offer more than a mere record of the doings of kings and princes and to point out at each phase the effect of events on the Russian people and their reactions to them.

The writer offers this brief outline in all humility, not as a satisfactory work for the purpose which it is designed to serve, but merely as a stop-gap which may perhaps meet the immediate need to some extent and contribute a little to the cause of Anglo-Russian friendship.

Our outline of Russian history is presented in the following arrangement:

1. Early history of the Slavonic tribes in Russia and the story of the Principality of Kiev, which united them.
2. Decline of Kiev and rise of the Principalities of Novgorod, Moscow and others.
3. The evolution of the Russian Empire as it was at the outbreak of war in 1914.
4. The story of Soviet Russia.

A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIA



# A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIA

---

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY HISTORY OF THE SLAVONIC TRIBES

THE European cradle of the Slavs seems to have been on the northern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains, whence they spread out in three different directions: south (Balkan Slavs), west (Poles, Czechs), and east (Russian Slavs—though they were not called “Russian” until much later).

The movement of the Russian Slavs probably took place as early as the seventh century. Some of their tribes established themselves on the right bank of the River Dnieper, while others crossed over to the left bank, but in course of time all the tribes pressed forward as far north as the River Oka, the headwaters of the Volga and Western Dvina and Lake Ilmen. Advancing up the basin of the Dnieper, the Russian tribes came into contact with Finnish and Lithuanian tribes, parts of whose territories they annexed.

Other neighbours were the Volga Bulgars and the Khazars. The former, a Turkish people, were settled in the region of the River Kama and had already built a number of towns. The Russians traded with these Bulgars and for some considerable time maintained peaceful relations with them. The Khazars, by whom the Bulgars were ruled, had a vast empire stretching from the Caucasus to the Volga and Middle Dnieper and including the south Russian steppes. The Khazars engaged in agriculture and commerce and had some important cities, the importance of which derived from the fact that the trade routes between Europe and Asia ran across Khazar territory. The cities were famous trading centres where Asiatics and Europeans, Christians, pagans, Moslems and Jews met on equal terms. The Khan of the Khazars, together with many of his people, had been converted to the Jewish faith and it is said that a proportion of present-day Russia's millions of Jewish inhabitants are descended from these converts.

In the eighth century some of the Russian tribes were conquered by the Khazars, but never oppressed by them. On the contrary, defeat only served to bring these tribes into closer contact with Eastern trade. Khazar rule or influence over the Russians lasted until sometime in the tenth century, when the Khazars were so exhausted by their wars with the nomadic Pecheniogs that their Russian subjects found themselves strong enough to attack them.

In the ninth century the Russian tribes made the acquaintance of the Varangians, Northmen



who had migrated over from Scandinavia and were living in adjacent territories or among the Russians themselves. The Varangians were organized, under chieftains or princes, in companies ("druzhinas") for purposes of trade, military service with the Russians or Greeks (the Byzantine Empire), or any other profitable ventures. The Varangians and Russians carried on a common trade (in furs, honey, wax, etc.) with the Greeks, and sometimes they fought shoulder to shoulder against common enemies; but sometimes they also fought each other, and the Varangians were more than once driven "beyond the sea" (the Baltic) back to their own country.

The reason why the Russian tribes occupied the Dnieper basin and chose to expand northwards was partly one of security. This was the forest belt and it afforded them a considerable measure of protection (as it does to the guerillas of Soviet Russia to-day!) at a time when the steppes to the south, towards the northern shores of the Black Sea, were rendered unsafe by nomadic hordes. Within the shelter of the forest the Russian tribes could graze their cattle, hunt, fish and gather wild honey in comparative peace. They could even engage in their primitive form of agriculture—burning down sections of the forest and scattering seeds mixed with ashes over the soil.

Of course, the Russians were nevertheless frequently attacked by the nomadic hordes and they had to be forever on the watch and maintain a high degree of mobility in order to be able to move away

quickly from a threatened locality. At the same time, they also built fortified towns surrounded with ramparts and stockades where they could take refuge in case of a sudden attack. That, probably, was the origin of such cities as Kiev, Chernigov, Smolensk, Polotsk and Novgorod, which have figured so prominently in the present war, and which in course of time became important trading centres, both internally and for export.

The geographical situation of the Russian tribes was also extremely favourable from the point of view of communications, which were such that they not only helped to promote economic development, but also enabled the tribes to maintain contact with each other, as well as facilitating expansion. A glance at the map will show that they had control of several important waterways. One led from the Gulf of Finland, via Lake Ladoga, Lake Ilmen and the Western Dvina, to the Black Sea; another, along the course of the Volga, to the Caspian Sea; and still another, by way of the Dnieper and via the Donets and the Don, to the Caspian Sea and the Sea of Azov. Thus the geographical situation offered every possibility not only of prosperity, but also of unification.

The social organization of the Russian tribes during their first period in their new home was based on the clan, which was ruled by an elder, the clan elders constituting the tribal council ("vieche"). But after the various clans and tribes had spread over great distances the ties between the clans became looser and the clans themselves broke up

into families, so that common clan property was replaced by family property. Association between individual families having common interests, though not related by blood, gave rise to the commune ("zadruga") which was ruled by elected elders.

The first principalities evolved with the development of trade on the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and the rise of the cities. The necessity of protecting goods in storage and in transit led to the engagement of armed "druzhinas", usually Varangians, and occasionally the leader or prince of such a company would seize power in a city; and as the surrounding country was usually subject to the city, more or less extensive principalities were thus established.

Of course, with the disappearance of the clan equality also disappeared. Apart from slaves captured in war, there were now other poor and oppressed classes who were in the power of rich landowners—probably former clan elders and tribal chiefs—for purely economic reasons.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRINCIPALITY OF KIEV

THERE are no reliable records concerning the establishment of the first organized State in Russia, but the traditional story goes as follows.

In the ninth century the Slavs of Novgorod and the neighbouring Finnish tribes were conquered by the Varangians, but they finally rose in revolt, drove the conquerors out and settled down to govern themselves. Soon, however, internal dissension broke out among them and there was no justice in the land, so, in 862, they sent a deputation across the sea to the "Russ" Varangians with a message: "Our land is great and rich, but there is no order in it; come and rule and govern us." Three brothers, with their kinsmen and "druzhinas," responded to the invitation. The eldest, Rurik, settled in Novgorod; the second, Sineus, on Lake Bielo Ozero (i.e. White Lake); and the third, Truvor, in Izborsk, near Pskov. Upon the death of Sineus and Truvor, Rurik annexed their dominions and became the sole ruler of the North. Two other Varangian leaders, Askold and Dir, who had come with the three brothers, went farther

south and conquered the city of Kiev, and later made war against the Byzantine Empire, plundering the capital.

Rurik was succeeded (879) by his kinsman Oleg, who exercised authority as regent during the minority of Igor, Rurik's son. Oleg marched south, captured Smolensk and Liubech on the Dnieper, then Kiev, which he declared was to be "the mother of Russian cities." It was so, for Oleg proceeded to unite under his sceptre all the tribes and cities along the great way from the "Varangian land to the Greeks" and to liberate the Russians from the Khazar yoke. He fortified Kiev and built strong cities on the edge of the steppe to protect the country against the eastern nomads, chiefly the Pecheniogs. Oleg also made a raid on Byzantium (907), laying siege to Constantinople and devastating the surrounding country. The Greek Emperor paid him a huge tribute in gold, costly fabrics and slaves, and concluded a commercial treaty with him. Thus Oleg, the "Russ" Varangian, became the founder of the first independent Russian State that was respected by Byzantium as well as by the neighbouring Western States. In the cultural sense, however, the Varangians made little impression on their Slav subjects, but were, on the contrary, absorbed by them, though it was they, the Varangians, who were the original "Russians".

After the death of Oleg (912) Igor, who proved to be a man of much smaller calibre, came into power. He led two campaigns against the Greeks. The first of these involved a naval battle, in which

he was defeated by Greek "fire bombs," the composition of which was "a great secret." The second, directed against Constantinople, ended with a treaty that was less favourable than those of Oleg. Igor was killed by members of a tribe from whom he was attempting to collect—personally, as was then the custom—a double tribute.

His widow, Olga, now became head of the State—for the status of women among the Slavs at this period was better than among other European peoples. The manner in which Olga avenged the death of her husband is related in detail in the ancient chronicles, but her greatest claim to fame was her conversion to Christianity and pilgrimage to Constantinople, where she was baptized by the Emperor and the Patriarch.

Her son, Sviatoslav, in whose place she ruled during his minority, was a great warrior. He early emancipated himself from his mother's influence and conducted victorious campaigns against the Volga Bulgars, the Khazars and, upon the Greek Emperor's request for help, also against the Danube Bulgarians (who had evolved from a colony of Volga Bulgarians). Sviatoslav took such a liking to the country that he wanted to make it the centre of his dominions and lingered there for a considerable time, returning to Kiev only at the urgent entreaty of his mother in order to relieve the city from the besieging Pecheniogs. Later, he went back to Danubian Bulgaria and had to be driven out by the Greeks. On his way home he was intercepted by the Pecheniogs and killed.

## CONVERSION TO CHRISTIANITY

After Sviatoslav's death there were sanguinary conflicts between his three sons in Russia, among whom he had divided the country, and only one, Vladimir, survived. Vladimir had to deal with discontent among the Varangians in his service, rebellions among the Slav tribes and attacks by the Volga Bulgarians, and was also drawn into war with the Greeks. The last mentioned conflict finally led to his adoption of the Christianity of the Greek Church and to his marriage with the Greek Emperor's sister Anna. It is not known exactly when and where Vladimir was baptized, but many traditions exist concerning the event. It was during the closing years of the tenth century that Vladimir caused his subjects to be converted, despite repeated revolts.

The conversion of the country to Christianity was, of course, an event of paramount importance, in more than one sense.

From the political point of view the hierarchy of the Church represented an instrument of unity. The head of the Church was the Patriarch of Constantinople, under whom was the Metropolitan of Kiev, who was over the bishops who, in turn, ruled over the lower clergy, so that this was a new organization, a new authority covering the whole State, but not antagonistic to it. This new authority was in a position to judge and protect the individual in a manner that was beyond the power of the reigning prince. His function at that time consisted chiefly in collecting taxes (personally or

through his appointees) and defending the country against foreign enemies—though his wars had a great deal to do with his export business, the taxes being paid in kind. There was no system of justice until the Church established the beginnings of one.

From the moral point of view the introduction of Christianity led to many changes: the abolition of polygamy, which had been very prevalent in Russia, the fostering of a more humane attitude towards slaves and, in general, a striving for a better, cleaner life.

Finally, from the cultural point of view Christianity involved the building of churches, with the attendant development of art, the translation of the Bible into the Slav language, the establishment of schools and the evolution of a taste for learning. The Church, as well as the monasteries that were rapidly arising, also became a large landowner, but—at that time—it employed no slave labour and did not descend to the exploitation of its workers. On the contrary, it gave an example of Christian life and conduct, and of humanity and charity in all directions.



## CHAPTER III

### DECLINE OF KIEV AND RISE OF OTHER PRINCIPALITIES

THE next ruler of note in Kiev after Vladimir was his son Yaroslav, who became known as "The Wise". It was under his reign that the first Russian code of laws, the "Russkaya Pravda," was compiled, though, naturally in view of the period, it related largely to the rights of landowners, slave owners and merchants and took little account of the people. Yaroslav built many churches and monasteries at Kiev, importing for the purpose the best artisans from Greece. In connection with his interest in religious literature the chronicler records that he "sowed the hearts of faithful men with the wisdom of books.". Yaroslav also sent traders and Ambassadors to Germany, France, Hungary, Poland and other countries, and further extended the prestige and influence of Kiev by contracting marriage alliances, for himself as well as all his sons and daughters, with other royal houses. But perhaps the most important achievement of Yaroslav was his decisive defeat of the Pecheniogs, who thereafter ceased to trouble Russia for ever.

However, soon after his death a new and even more turbulent nomadic enemy, the Polovtsy, appeared, ravaging the country again and again. Their activities were greatly facilitated by petty squabbles between Yaroslav's sons and grandsons over questions of succession which led to the disruption of the unity created by him. In addition, throughout this period, extending from the middle of the eleventh to the end of the twelfth century, there were repeated revolts on the part of the common people, largely because the free husbandmen ( "sverds") had been reduced to virtual serfdom by the boyars—rich landowners who constituted the high nobility—as well as by some of the monasteries. In 1113 Vladimir Monomach, a grandson of Yaroslav, was invited to become Prince of Kiev, partly in order to crush such a revolt. (Vladimir momentarily linked Russia with England, having married Gytha, the daughter of Harold.) During his brief reign Vladimir managed to unite all the princes against the pagan Polovtsy and attack them in their own camps. But after his death (1125) the feud was resumed, and so were the devastations of the dreaded Polovtsy. In the circumstances Kiev inevitably lost its importance both as a powerful principality and as a commercial centre, and by the end of the twelfth century it began to sink into insignificance, many of its inhabitants having emigrated to less troubled and more prosperous regions. During the period of internecine strife the following three new political centres grew up in place and at the expense of Kiev:

1. Novgorod. 2. Vladimir, in the Suzdal-Rostov region. 3. Galich, on the Dniester.

After the death of Vladimir Monomach Novgorod was strong enough to secure, through its "vieche" or city council, the right to select its own prince and also to appoint its own bishop. As against the prince, Novgorod reserved the right to appoint its own *posadnik*—mayor or governor. Thus the city gained complete self-government, the "vieche" being the source of all power and the prince having little authority, except in time of war.

The method whereby the "vieche," of which every free citizen was a member, made its decisions was rather interesting. Votes were given not by a show of hands, but by a lusty shout. If the shout was unanimous, the proposal was passed. If there was opposition, the matter was settled by a free fight between the protagonists at an appointed place.

Novgorod was the scene of constant strife between the aristocratic rich and the common people, mainly over class interests. Both tried to gain control of the "vieche," and neither was particular as to the means. In 1209 a rebellion broke out owing to excessive taxation and oppression of the free husbandsmen and many landowners were banished from the land of Novgorod.

In the year 1240 the principality of Novgorod was invaded by the Swedes who penetrated as far as the Neva. Alexander, Prince of Novgorod, then fell upon them and defeated them so decisively that he became known ever after as Alexander Nevsky (Alexander of the Neva). Soon after this the

Germans captured Pskov and came within twenty miles of Novgorod. Alexander drove them back to Lake Peipus and there, on the ice, inflicted such heavy punishment on them that they ceased to trouble the Russians for a long time. Alexander also defeated the invading Lithuanians.

During a temporary lull in the quarrels between Yaroslav's descendants at the end of the eleventh century, the Suzdal territory, which lies along the Kliazma and Moskva rivers, was made into an independent principality and given to Vladimir Monomach, who settled it on his son Yuri. The territory included the village of Moscow. Yuri, as well as his successors, did everything in their power to attract settlers, building roads through swamps and forests and offering other facilities. Within a century Suzdal became a powerful principality, with a large immigrant population from Kiev, Smolensk, Novgorod and other places, and with a number of great cities, including Moscow. The real creator of Suzdal was Yuri's son, Andrei. Ignoring the towns of Rostov and Suzdal, where the "vieche" tradition was strong, Andrei chose the more insignificant town of Vladimir as his capital, developing and fortifying it. Not content to be master only of his own principality, he demanded submission from all Russian princes and successfully fought those who resisted, including the princes of Novgorod and Kiev.

His autocratic but orderly regime was continued under his immediate successor, Vsevolod, who ruled Suzdal from 1176 till 1212, but after his

death sons and nephews engaged in civil war and the principality was finally broken up into so-called appanages, each prince being absolute master in his own territory.

The principality of Galicia, whose capital was Galich, experienced a brief period of power and prosperity, but was later conquered by the Poles and Lithuanians.

## CHAPTER IV

### TARTAR RULE IN RUSSIA—THE RISE OF MOSCOW

WHEN Kiev had relapsed into insignificance and Novgorod, Suzdal and Galich were rising into prominence, the Tartars made their appearance in Russia.

After conquering North China and other territories these tribes of savage herdsman, united under the leadership of Jenghiz Khan, made their way to the Caspian Sea, crossed the Caucasus and came into conflict with the Polovtsy in the steppes of the Black Sea. The Russian princes united with the Polovtsy, but their combined armies were crushingly defeated by the Tartars on the River Kalka (1223) and pursued as far as the Dnieper. The Tartars then disappeared as suddenly as they had come.

### THE GOLDEN HORDE

But fourteen years later they returned, this time under Khan Batu, a nephew of Jenghiz. After destroying the Volga Bulgarian kingdom, they disposed of the disunited Russian princes one by one, captured Kiev (1240), then marched on to Western

Europe. Meeting with strong resistance (after devastating Hungary and part of Poland) Batu Khan returned to Russia and established in the lower reaches of the Volga a State called the Golden Horde, with Sarai, a rich city with palaces and orchards as the capital. It was from here that the Tartars ruled the Russians. The Russians were not dispossessed, nor were their princes dethroned, but a crushing tribute was imposed on the people (though not on the clergy and the monasteries) and collected without mercy. Gradually, however, and after many savagely repressed revolts, the situation improved to the extent that the tribute was collected for the Khan by the Russian princes themselves.

The Tartar conquest cut off Suzdalian Russia (the land of the "Great Russians") from Novgorod, which was open to German influence, as well as from Kiev, where Polish ideas were penetrating, and this explains the cultural stagnation of the Great Russians during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and the impress of Mongolian customs and manners upon their lives.

#### THE MOSCOW DYNASTY

The rise of Moscow to national prominence falls within the period of Tartar rule. Originally it was a Suzdalian appanage, given by Alexander Nevsky when he became Grand Duke of Suzdal to his son Daniel. The primary cause of Moscow's rapid progress was its exceptionally favourable geographical position, being situated at the junction of several highways leading from South to North

Russia and from the Land of Novgorod to the Land of Riazam. The princes of Moscow took advantage of this fact, grew rich and powerful and acquired more and more territory. One of Daniel's sons, Yuri, with the aid of the Tartar Horde, finally secured the title of Grand Duke of Suzdal for the dynasty, though the Grand Ducal sceptre was first wielded by his brother Ivan "Kalita" (Ivan the Money-bag) who came into power in 1328.

Ivan Kalita owed his nickname to his lust for money, though some said that it was given to him because he always carried a purse from which to distribute alms. Little is known about Kalita's reign, but it is presumed that it was he who persuaded the Tartar Khan to allow the Russian princes to collect the tribute for him—and whereas at the beginning of his reign he had only four towns in his possession, he bequeathed to his children ninety-seven towns and villages, some of which he had purchased. His greatest triumph, however, was when he secured the transfer of the Metropolitan See from Kiev to Moscow.

At all events, Kalita and his descendants gathered the disunited Russian principalities into a single State, with Moscow as its capital. The boyars from other parts hastened to offer their services to the Grand Duke of Moscow; to the clergy Moscow became the holy city of Russia; while the common people flocked there because the territory did not suffer from Tartar incursions and the Grand Duchy was also prosperous.



## A FAMOUS VICTORY

Kalita's grandson Dmitri already felt strong enough to risk open war against the Tartars. His first attempt took place at a time of internal strife among the Tartars. Dmitri met the armies of Mamai Khan on the Vozha river and defeated them (1378). To repair the blow to Tartar prestige, Mamai Khan spent two years gathering a vast army against the Russians and he also concluded an alliance with Russia's other enemy, the Lithuanian-Polish King Jagiello. Dmitri met the Tartars at Kulikovo, near the Don river, before they were able to link up with Jagiello, and inflicted a decisive defeat on Mamai Khan.

It was an important victory, for a legend had arisen that the Tartars were invincible and Russia had destroyed that legend. (Soviet Russia has been engaged in destroying another such legend for the past few months!) Although two years later, in 1382, the Tartars took Dmitri unawares and defeated him, it was clear that their power was declining—or that Russia's power was increasing—and that Russia was ripe for an open struggle for independence.

However, there was a lack of unity, and in the course of the next four decades Russia was twice attacked in force by the Tartars, once under Tamerlane and again under Prince Edigei, and later there were further periodic incursions by another Tartar Khan who established a kingdom near the junction of the Kazanka river with the Volga, where he built the city of Khazan.

## IVAN III. THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL STATE

The next outstanding Grand Duke after Dmitri was Ivan III, his great-grandson, who came into power in 1462. Ivan, a man of ability and determination, succeeded in welding together the territories of his neighbours and rivals with his own into a Russian national State. He impressed upon his contemporaries the idea that the Grand Duke was a national sovereign with undivided authority and established a regular court, with appropriate pomp and ceremonial expressive of his exalted rank.

Ivan also threw off the Tartar yoke. By this time there were three Hordes, the Golden Horde, the Khazan Horde and the Crimean Horde. Ivan defeated the Khazan Khan and made him his vassal and induced the Crimean Khan to ally himself with the Russians against the Golden Horde. The opposing armies met on the River Ugra, but neither of them dared to attack and they stood facing each other for several months, until winter and disturbing news from their kingdom forced the Tartars of the Golden Horde to withdraw and Ivan became the "victor." The Golden Horde collapsed a few decades later (1502), but the Crimean Horde continued to be a thorn in the side of Russia for nearly three centuries longer.

In 1472, after the death of his first wife, Ivan III married Sophia, niece of the ex-Emperor Paleologue, who was then living in Rome, the Byzantine Empire having been conquered by the Turks in 1453. Ivan now considered himself to be the successor of the Byzantine emperors, adopted their

emblem, the double eagle, and began to call himself Tsar (a corruption of Cæsar) of "all the Russias." The marriage was of importance from the political as well as the cultural point of view. It strengthened Moscow's relations with the West, especially with Italy. In Sophia's train came highly skilled Greek and Italian craftsmen and artists, whose services were enlisted to build churches and other stone buildings, to cast cannon, mint money, and take charge of diplomatic missions.

#### CONFLICTS WITH LITHUANIAN-POLISH KINGDOM

At this point it is necessary to give a brief survey of Lithuanian-Polish developments, which have an important bearing on this phase of Russian history.

During the closing years of the twelfth century the Lithuanian tribes had united under a strong prince and during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries they conquered, in addition to their own territory on the Baltic Sea, White Russia and parts of the Ukraine and what was then Russia proper, so that the frontiers of the Lithuanian State nearly reached those of the Grand Duchy of Moscow and included the strategically important city of Smolensk. In 1386 Jagiello, King of Lithuania, married the Queen of Poland and a union between the two States came into being. At this period the Lithuanian-Polish Monarchy was strong enough not only to inflict a crushing defeat on the Germans at Tannenberg (1410), but also to hold down the Russian territories, and even exert

continual pressure on Moscow. Their great weakness in these territories lay in the fact that their successive kings and nobles were trying to force their Russian subjects to abandon their Greek Orthodox faith in favour of Roman Catholicism and this, quite apart from physical oppression, kept the Russians in a constant ferment.

There were many armed conflicts between Moscow and the Lithuanian-Polish Monarchy, in some of which both sides occasionally relied on Tartar aid. It fell to Ivan III to conduct the decisive campaign against these powerful neighbours and in a series of wars (1492 and 1500-1503) Moscow reconquered most of the Russian lands and also compelled the Monarchy to recognize the voluntary transference of the territories and allegiance of some Russian Orthodox princes who had previously allied themselves with Lithuania. At all events, under the reign of Ivan III the possessions of the Russian State increased three-fold.

#### CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE

As far as the common people were concerned Ivan's re-conquest of Russian territories brought considerable amelioration, quite apart from the question of religious freedom. This applied not only to the territories that had actually been under foreign rule, but also to Novgorod and the Land of Novgorod, which had only been under Lithuanian influence. There Ivan virtually "abolished" the boyars (chiefly through deportation to Moscow), while the peasantry were organized in tax paying

communes, as in Moscow, and freed from oppression.

At the same time, by now a new system of land tenure was developing which eventually led to the destruction of the communes (*mirs*) and to the virtual enslavement of the peasants. This class was known as *pomeschchiks* (literally, "placemen") who were given grants of land by the Grand Duke in return for military service when required. Now, these *pomeschchiks* were bound to provide so many fully equipped men in case of war, so they could not afford to let their peasants leave whenever they liked, as they were allowed to do formerly. The older landowners, the boyars and monasteries, had tried to solve this problem, from the point of view of labour, by keeping their peasants deeply in debt. With the advent of the *pomeschchiks* a system of registration was introduced, which finally resulted in binding the peasant to the soil—compelling him to work for his master, as well as pay taxes to the prince.

In the matter of church lands there was an interesting controversy. Towards the end of Ivan III's reign the situation was that the number of monasteries had considerably increased and the monastic estates had reached colossal proportions. Some of the monasteries were administered on truly Christian lines, but others used their wealth selfishly and wickedly. When the darker side became too apparent the matter came up for discussion. There were two parties among the monks: one suggested that great wealth does not necessarily undermine monastic discipline, while the other

held that monks should own no property. From this a bitter conflict arose, which affected the whole religious and social life of the period—but the advocates of property for the monasteries, known as the Josephites, won. The monasteries were left in possession of their wealth, supported the idea of autocracy, and were in turn supported by the Grand Dukes or Tsars.

## CHAPTER V

### IVAN THE TERRIBLE

THE first real Tsar of Russia was Ivan the Terrible, Ivan III's grandson. He lost his father at an early age and was for ten years at the mercy of the high nobility—the boyars and petty princes—who poisoned his mother and neglected him even in the matter of food and raiment, though outwardly they treated him with much reverence, for by now the idea of the sovereign's divinity had taken root among the people. ( "God and the sovereign only knows," was a common saying.) Ivan learned to conceal his feelings and deceive his enemies even as a young boy. However, under the influence of the Metropolitan, his only friend, he studied a great deal, preparing himself for his great task.

#### REFORMS

In 1547, when only seventeen years old, Ivan proclaimed himself to be the autocratic Tsar of Russia, married the daughter of an ordinary boyar (not a princess) and had himself crowned. Three years after he summoned a council of church and lay

dignitaries to reform church government and the administration of justice. He also granted a large measure of local self-government to the people, so that the only government appointees in the provinces were the *voivodes* in command of the garrisons and the "town clerks" in charge of government property. His military reforms included the organization of regiments of nobles as well as infantry with muskets (*streltsi*), and some artillery companies. The *pomeschchiks* were also reorganized.

#### MORE CONQUESTS

Ivan the Terrible (though he was as yet not known as such) pursued the same policy of conquest as his two predecessors. He decided to crush the Tartar khanates completely. In 1552 he subjugated the Khazan Tartars. In his siege of the capital, Khazan, he used gunpowder for the first time, blowing up the Tartar fortifications and also employing cannons. In addition, he blew up a secret tunnel that led from the city to the Volga, thereby depriving the inhabitants of drinking water. Four years later Ivan conquered the Astrakhan Khanate, which had been built on the ruins of the Golden Horde. By these two conquests he secured control not only of the entire course of the Volga, but also of vast areas of fertile black land, in addition to which he became the embodiment of the victory of Christianity over Mohammedanism. The Russian people celebrated his triumphs in their songs and made Ivan their epic hero.



## ENCIRCLEMENT OF RUSSIA

Ivan went on to conquer the Caucasus, then turned against the Baltic Germans, Lithuania, Poland and the Swedes. These wars went on, with varying fortunes, for twenty-four years, with a definite design behind them as far as Russia was concerned. For Russia was then effectively encircled. Her neighbours were keeping her away from the sea and also preventing foreigners from going into Russia, so that they had a stranglehold on Russian trade and development. Ivan failed to break the ring, but the design remained, to be accomplished by a future Tsar.

## BRITISH "INVASION"

However, under Ivan's reign the ring was at least pierced—by an Englishman, Richard Chancellor, the captain of one of three ships that had left England in 1553 in search of a northwest passage to China and India. Two of the ships were lost, but Chancellor arrived safely in the White Sea and made his way to Moscow. Ivan gave him a hearty welcome and granted him "and the guests arrived from the English land with wares brought in their ships from beyond the seas, the right to come and go in safety in his Russian dominions and to buy and build houses without let or hindrance." That was the beginning of Anglo-Russian relations. The English had broken a sort of blockade of Russia (as they are doing to-day, in 1942, on a much vaster scale!) and Ivan considered it worth while to cultivate them. In 1556

he sent an ambassasor to London, whose splendid entry is recorded in the writings of a London Merchant of that time, Henry Machyn:

“The twenty-seventh day of February came toward London out of Scotland a duke of Muscovia, as ambassador, and divers of the merchants of England, as well as others of all nations, and so they met him beyond Shoreditch in coats of velvet and coats of fine cloth guarded with velvet and with fringe of silk and chains of gold, and after comes my Lord Montacute and divers lords and knights, and gentlemen in gorgeous apparel.”

After this Russia was visited by many English merchants (and other Englishmen and Scotsmen, as we shall record), some of whom have left quaint and fascinating accounts of their impressions. Anthony Jenkinson, to mention only one of these merchant-authors, in describing how he dined with Ivan (and 600 of his “diuersely apparellled” other guests) wrote: “I was set at a little table hauing no stranger with me, directly before the Emperour’s face. Being thus set and placed, the Emperour sent me diuers bowles of wine and meade and many dishes of meat from his own hand, which were brought me by a Duke and my table seemed all in golde and silver, and so likewise on other tables were set boles of gold, set with stone worth by estimation 400 pounds sterling one cup, beside the plate which serued the tables.”

For some time the English had a monopoly of the Russian trade, and although Ivan later had some long-distance quarrels with our own Queen Eliza-

both, relations between the two countries remained cordial.

#### INTRODUCTION OF PRINTING

Ivan was also responsible for the introduction of printing and a system of education in Russia, though his motives might have been less than idealistic: he considered it important that the people should read books glorifying his reign and deeds. Ivan's own copy of the Bible, printed in 1581, was brought back to England by Sir Jerome Horsey, the English Ambassador to Moscow, and is preserved at the British Museum. (Horsey's note on the flyleaf: "This Bibell in the Slavonian tongue had owt of the Emperor's librari.")

#### IVAN BECOMES "THE TERRIBLE"

In 1560, after the death of his wife, a complete change came over Ivan, and he not only removed his old advisers, but began to live a life of debauchery. During the succeeding years he married six more wives, improving somewhat on Henry VIII. It was after 1564 that he became "the Terrible." At this time he had a fixed idea that the boyars and princelings of his court were disloyal to him and he formed from among his military "placemen" a special force called the *oprichniks*, whose emblem was a dog's head and a broom ("to track down and sweep away the Tsar's enemies"). With the aid of this organization Ivan executed or banished many of the boyars and princelings, confiscated their lands and strengthened his own autocratic powers.

He also maintained a reign of terror in other directions, committing many horrible cruelties—and following them up with prayers at the monasteries. Ivan thus succeeded not only in practically exterminating the whole of the old aristocracy, but also in almost desolating the central provinces of Moscow, for the banished boyars were followed by their serfs, while large numbers of the free peasants migrated south, where there was no terror, but, instead, plenty of black earth that was far more fertile than the northern parts.

#### ORIGIN OF THE COSSACKS

It was largely during Ivan's reign that the Cossacks evolved into a separate entity. They were fugitive serfs, who despite the system of registration had left their masters and settled on the steppes in the southern regions, on the banks of the Don and Dnieper. In course of time these serfs formed strong settlements, became skilful in the arts of war and achieved a large measure of independence under their Hetmans or Atamans, to whom alone they acknowledged allegiance.

In 1581, a band of Cossacks were engaged by the Stroganovs, a family of wealthy merchants and landowners in the Urals and other parts, who had acquired the right to build trading stations and forts. They sent the Cossacks, under their Hetman, Yermak, to deal with the Tartar's of the Sibir Khanate (in Siberia), who were giving the Stroganovs a great deal of trouble. Yermak (with only 840 men!) defeated the Tartars and

captured their capital, Sibir. Ivan the Terrible rewarded Yermak and also the members of his detachment. However, Siberia was not finally subjugated until a few years later, when an army was sent against the Tartars from Moscow.

Thus under the reign of Ivan the Terrible Russia's possessions were again very considerably enlarged and still more foreign races were incorporated with her population.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PERIOD OF TROUBLE"—BORIS GODUNOV

IVAN THE TERRIBLE died in 1584. Shortly before his death, in a fit of rage, he struck and killed his eldest son. Two others remained, Fedor, aged twenty seven and Dmitri, then still an infant, being the son of Ivan's seventh wife, Maria. Fedor became Tsar, but being virtually an imbecile [(though beloved of the people owing to his piety—his chief amusement was to ring church bells) he left the government of the country to Boris Godunov, his brother-in-law, a boyar of Tartar descent, and a man of considerable ability. Dmitri, with his mother, lived in virtual banishment at the town of Uglich, under the care of a boyar family who were antagonistic to them. In May, 1591, the young Tsarevich died mysteriously. Some said that he had been assassinated at the behest of Boris, others believed that he cut his own throat accidentally in the course of a childish game. Horsey, the English Ambassador, records how, one night, he was visited by the Dowager Empress's brother, who told him that "The Charowich Demetrius is dead his throate was cutt about the sixth hower". . . .and begged

him to "haelp and geave some good thinge for the passion of Christ his sake," to save the Empress who had taken poison.

The tragedy was followed by a riot in the town of Uglich. Boris punished the rioters by deporting them to Siberia, which was then beginning to become a convict settlement, while Dmitri's mother was forced to enter a convent.

#### FAMINE AND PLAGUE

Boris, though disliked by the boyars and never popular with the people, was a competent ruler. He beat back an invasion of the Crimean Tartars (with which Fedor thought he could deal by bell-ringing), built Archangel, fortified Smolensk, and established relations with various foreign powers. When, in 1598, Fedor died, terminating Ivan Kalita's dynasty, Boris Godunov was elected Tsar. In 1601 a famine broke out, the harvest having failed for three years running. It is recorded that the people ate chaff, cats and dogs, and were even reduced to cannibalism. Famine was accompanied by plague and corpses lay strewn along the roads, with no one to bury them. Boris showed great energy in grappling with the situation, distributing grain, finding employment for the needy and combating usury. But his resources were inadequate and there was a great deal of unrest in the towns, while in the country hordes of famine stricken people, as well as bandits, roamed about, plundering, burning and killing.

## THE PRETENDER

At this time rumours arose in Poland and south-western Russia that the Tsarevich Dmitri had not died at Uglich, but had escaped from Godunov and was still alive. The man who assumed this name and later became known as the Pretender, was really an unfrocked monk who had once lived in the Kremlin and who had fled to Poland and become a Catholic. Sigismund III, King of Poland, helped him to raise an army of Poles and Cossacks to regain the throne "usurped" by Godunov—the situation in Russia was favourable for an attack upon her. The Pretender marched against Moscow, was defeated, gathered another army composed chiefly of discontented Russians from the frontier areas and marched again. Boris went to meet him, but his sudden death (April, 1605), left the way open for the Pretender, especially as the Moscow boyars whom Boris had antagonized came out in support of him against Godunov's son, though they knew he was an impostor.

The "true Tsar Dmitri" arrived in Moscow in June, 1605, met his "mother," who acknowledged him as her son, and had himself crowned. However, from the first the Pretender began to antagonize the Russian boyars and people. Ignoring the Russian nobility he ran the government with the aid of Polish-Lithuanian secretaries, distributed large estates among the foreign nobles, and offended the religious susceptibilities of the Russian people. The explosion came a few days after his marriage to Marina Mnishek, a Catholic Polish woman



(May, 1606). The numerous Polish guests who had come with the bride were accommodated in private houses and they treated their hosts with open contempt. In addition, on the day of the wedding the Poles were invited to the palace, but the Russians were not even admitted to the Kremlin,—and there was also the fact that the new Tsaritsa had not become Orthodox, and the ceremony, in defiance of custom, had taken place on the eve of an Orthodox holiday. The Russian boyars, exploiting the popular resentment against the Pretender, organized a plot. Early one morning they gave the alarm: "The Poles are killing the boyars!" The mob attacked the Poles, massacring more than two thousand of them, while the boyars themselves broke into the palace, killing the Pretender and arresting the Tsarina.

#### PEASANT REVOLT

The leader of the plot, the boyar Shuisky, became the next Tsar, but from the first there were several movements against him. One was led by Bolotnikov, an escaped serf who had been abroad and who was really a social revolutionary. He aroused the peasants and serfs against the boyars and landowners and promised to abolish serfdom and to exterminate the "wicked" boyars. Bolotnikov and his followers were denounced by their enemies as "thieves," but when he moved on Moscow he was joined by many discontented nobles. However, when this army was close to Moscow the nobles realized that their alliance with Bolotnikov was against their own interests

and they went over to Shuisky, the Tsar, thus ensuring the defeat of the "thieves."

#### "THE THIEF"

Another movement against Shuisky was that of the Second Pretender, another "Dmitri" who claimed to have escaped from the Kremlin at the time of the plot. The people of the provinces believed him and he was able to gather a large army, including the remnants of the "thieves," and many disaffected Lithuanian and Polish nobles. As this army was moved by similar revolutionary ideas to those of Bolotnikov, they were also called "thieves" and their leader "The Thief." "The Thief" proved to be a most formidable proposition and it was a long time before, with foreign help, he was finally defeated.

#### A POLISH TSAR

Meanwhile, however, the Polish King Sigismund also declared war on Moscow, investing Smolensk and defeating Shuisky's army. Shuisky was thereupon deposed by the Russian boyars and replaced by Wladislaw, the Polish Crown Prince, on whose behalf a government was set up in Moscow, the Kremlin being occupied by Polish forces.

#### END OF POLISH RULE

Six months later the people of Moscow rose in rebellion against the Poles, but were defeated and the greater part of the city was burned down. At this point there began a patriotic movement against the foreigners and their Russian boyar supporters.

The movement was led by the Orthodox Patriarch (the Patriarchate having been established in Moscow under Godunov), but the real hero of the subsequent successful uprising was Kozma Minin, a Nizhni Novgorod butcher, who organized and equipped a large army, which included many peasant detachments who had been fighting against the landowners. In 1612 the Kremlin was retaken and the Poles had to flee from Moscow. To celebrate the victory the Khazan Cathedral was erected in the Red Square in Moscow.

#### THE FIRST ROMANOV

The Princes Pozharski and Troubetskoi, leaders of the victorious army, called a convention to elect a new Tsar and in February, 1613, chiefly at the insistent demand of the Cossacks and the people of the provinces, Michael Romanov, sixteen year old son of the Patriarch Filaret Romanov, a member of an important Russian boyar family, was placed upon the throne.

Summing up the Period of Troubles, which lasted nearly twenty-five years, and was originally the outcome of the extinction of Kalita's dynasty, it may be said to have consisted of three stages. 1. The struggle of the boyars, who had been ousted by Ivan the Terrible and Godunov, to regain their former power. 2. A popular movement which the boyars themselves had launched when setting up the Pretender against Godunov. The Pretender's main support came from the Cossacks, that is, peasants and serfs who had fled from the

oppression of the boyars and other landowners, and the Cossacks continued to fight this class after the fall of the Pretender. 3. The union of the lower nobility and citizens to fight first the Poles, then the Cossack "thieves." The outcome of all this was that the boyars, who had started the trouble, were utterly ruined and many of them completely disappeared. The Cossacks also failed in their object—abolition of serfdom and privileges for themselves—and their repeated revolts were always crushed. In the end they set up something like an independent State on the Don, ceased to trouble Moscow, and occupied themselves with hunting, fishing and fighting the Crimean Tartars and the Turks. The chief influence in the State of Moscow thus fell into the hands of the lesser nobles and the city middle class. It was their militia that had liberated Moscow, and it was their national convention that had elected Michael Romanov. It was they, too, who composed the Tsar's own council (the Boyars' Duma) and the staffs of officials who took up the administration of the country after the troubles.

It was thus that the old order came to an end and a new order began.

## CHAPTER VII

### MICHAEL AND ALEXIS

MICHAEL ROMANOV had a "co-Tsar" in his father, Patriarch Filaret, a man of wisdom and experience. Under his direction the National Assembly (Zemski Sobor) functioned uninterruptedly for ten years. The first task was to put down internal unrest, that is, to crush the popular movements. This proved to be fairly easy as compared with the abolition of corruption on the part of both the *voivodes* (commanders of provincial garrisons) and government officials, and the combating of tax evasion, for the corrupt functionaries were too strongly entrenched, while tax evasion by the landowners was carried on in a strictly legal manner—by nominally attaching the land to the estates of monasteries or boyars, neither of whom were liable to taxation. In addition to all this, Russia was carrying on a war against the Poles and the Swedes. The Swedish trouble was solved with the aid of England. Peace negotiations were started through the mediation of an English merchant, John Merrick, and resulted in the return of Novgorod (captured by the Swedes during the Troubles) to Russia. The Poles were a more difficult proposition, but

eventually a long truce was signed, which provided, among other things, for the release of the Tsar's father, Filaret, who at the period in question was in Polish captivity.

Michael encouraged foreign trade in order to increase his revenues. The English enjoyed a virtual monopoly, with the Dutch a bad second, and the French, despite the efforts of Louis XIII in 1629, nowhere. Russia began to swarm with foreign adventurers, but the Scots were probably the most prominent. There had been Scotsmen in the bodyguard of the Pretender. Under the reign of Michael there was a minor invasion of Hamiltons, Bruces, Gordons, Leslie and Crawfurds.

A curious incident at this time was the capture of Azov, in the Crimea, by the Don Cossacks and its rejection by Michael's National Assembly when they offered the city to him, for the reason that the fortifications of Azov were in a dilapidated state and the Tsar had no money to repair them; and in any case the corrupt officials in the provinces and the capital were just then a greater evil than Turks and Tartars.

Michael was succeeded by his son Alexis in 1645. He had the misfortune of placing his faith in his tutor, the boyar Morozov, a selfish, domineering man who, with the aid of others of his own type, oppressed the people. Alexis did not realize this until a revolt broke out in Moscow, as well as in some other cities, in the course of which many of Morozov's confederates were killed.

The chief political events of Alexis' reign were:

The enactment of a new code of laws, one of which bound the serfs to the land still more rigidly, while another forbade the clergy to acquire more land—and a third imposed the loss of his nose on anyone found smoking tobacco! Foreign trade was confined to Archangel.

A war against Poland, with a coincident plague and neglect of agriculture. Shortage of silver (owing to the restriction of foreign trade) led (1656) to the minting of copper coins, with consequent depreciation of the currency and an uprising which compelled a reversion to silver coins.

The revolt of the "naked" Cossacks under Razin. From small beginnings, this uprising developed into a nation-wide movement, one of many which proved that the Russian people never submitted to oppression for long without at least a determined attempt to improve their condition. Razin was one of a large number of fugitive serfs who sought sanctuary and a new life among the Don Cossacks. But the Cossacks refused to accept the new arrivals as equals and sharers of their privileges, nor would they allow normal agriculture in their territory, for fear of the evolution of serfdom among them; they themselves, as already mentioned, lived by hunting and fishing. Thus the only way for the fugitives—the "naked" Cossacks—to maintain themselves was to work for the regular Cossacks. In order to avoid this Razin, with some 2,000 of his fellows, attacked the Persian settlements along the Caspian and after

some months (in 1669), covered with fame and loaded with enormous booty, returned to the Don. He was now joined by all sorts of destitute characters. In 1670 Razin went against the Tsar's *voivodes* on the Volga, was now joined by the lower classes both in the towns and in the country, and conquered many urban centres, torturing and killing government officials and nobles who fell into his hands, and pillaging their homes. The insurrection spread so rapidly that within a short time it covered an enormous territory along the Middle and Lower Volga. Razin was eventually defeated by the Tsar's well trained regiments and executed, but it took several years to pacify the rebellious territory.

#### REFORMS OF PATRIARCH NIKON

A long-standing religious controversy that was brought to a head, though not completely resolved, under the reign of Alexis, concerned the Russian version of Holy Writ and the dogma and ritual of the Russian Church.

Before the introduction of printing under Ivan the Terrible, all Russian versions of the Bible and the Prayer Book were hand-written and the different manuscripts contained many errors and even absurdities. Subsequent attempts, notably those of Patriarch Filaret, to correct the Russian texts on the basis of the Greek original failed, chiefly because the very errors and absurdities had come to be regarded as sacred and revision stirred up bitter theological disputes.



An authoritative ruling in the matter was finally imposed through the activities of Patriarch Nikon, a man of humble origin but dictatorial inclinations whom Alexis had raised to a position of great power. Nikon, in 1654, convened a Church Council which passed the corrections submitted by him. These were later sanctioned and blessed by the Patriarch of Constantinople.

However, largely owing to the dictatorial attitude of Nikon, revision led to a schism in the Russian Church, a section of which continued to cling to the "Old Faith," with all the old errors. The "Old Believers" were anathemized and persecuted.

The historical importance of these events lies in the fact that the repercussions of the Church schism affected the whole of Russia's national life for centuries, right down to our own times. Indeed, religion was always so closely interwoven with Russian national consciousness that the Russians themselves *felt* no distinction between nationality and religion, and to them "I am Orthodox" meant precisely the same thing as "I am Russian." All opposition in Russia to Europeanization ultimately had a religious background.

#### WESTERNIZATION

Attempts at Westernization were also a feature of Alexis's reign. At the initiative of some of the Tsar's nobles who had travelled abroad, Western dress and manners as well as Western domestic objects and musical instruments were introduced. European learning began to be cultivated and

some prominent Russians went abroad to study. A vast cultural change was being initiated and Russia was on her way to closer contact with the Western world.

Under Alexis's reign Russia regained from Poland and Lithuania Smolensk, parts of the Ukraine and also other territories, thanks chiefly to the oppressive and contemptuous treatment meted out by the Poles to the Dnieper Cossacks and the Russian inhabitants in general. The policy of the Polish nobles (*pans*) was to impose Roman Catholicism and serfdom. This caused the peasants to join the Cossacks, who thereby became increasingly stronger. After many previous revolts the Cossacks during the reign of Alexis rebelled again and defeated the Poles. The Cossack leader, Bogdan Khmel'nitsky, made a treaty with them, but neither side was satisfied with this (least of all the peasants, whom Khmel'nitsky also oppressed) and the Cossacks started another rebellion. Finding himself too weak against the Poles, Khmel'nitsky offered allegiance to the Tsar in return for aid, and it was for this reason that Alexis made war on Poland. The half of the Ukraine (the "borderland") situated on the left bank of the Dnieper was thus re-annexed to Russia, though it retained a considerable measure of independence.

#### TSAR ALEXIS AND CHARLES II

Incidentally, Tsar Alexis (as recorded in the Russian Imperial Archives) sent money to our Charles II when he was a wanderer and in needy circum-

stances. Charles wrote the Tsar a letter dated September 16, 1649, announcing the execution of his father. The letter was taken to Moscow by Lord Culpepper. In 1664, when Charles was safely seated on the throne, he sent an embassy to Alexis which was received with tremendous magnificence.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PETER THE GREAT AND HIS IMMEDIATE SUCCESSORS

ALEXIS died in 1676, leaving two sons, Fedor and Ivan, and a daughter, Sofia, by his first wife, and one son, Peter, by his second. Fedor became Tsar, but died eight years later, at the age of twenty. Ivan being mentally backward, a feud arose as to whether Peter should be elevated to the throne, and arising from this the Kremlin was attacked by a mob of the *streltsy* (the regular infantry already mentioned) who murdered many of Peter's maternal relations before his eyes. Soon after this Peter and his mother moved to a village on the outskirts of Moscow, leaving Sophia to rule as Regent during the minority of Ivan and Peter, who had been proclaimed joint Tsars.

Peter, at this time still a young boy, learned to read and write, but otherwise his scholastic education was rather sketchy. In any case, he was more interested in playing at soldiers and acquiring the art of "seamanship." He and his mother mixed a great deal with the foreigners living at Moscow, including the Scotsman Gordon, who was then a general in the Russian Army. In 1689,

at the age of seventeen (which gave him the right to reign) Peter married, but did not abandon his preoccupation with "Mars and Neptune." Then, one night in August of that year, Peter was dragged out of bed and made to flee, because "Sophia was sending *streltsy* to kill the Tsar."

#### PETER TAKES CHARGE—PETER IN ENGLAND

A popular movement against Sophia and the incapacity of Ivan now compelled Peter to take an interest in the government of the country. One of his first ventures was to attack the Turkish fortress of Azov, at the mouth of the Don (1695). He was aided by Gordon, but failed for lack of a Navy. Peter thereupon proceeded to build a fleet and to capture the fortress (1696). As Ivan was now dead, Peter took the reins firmly in his hand, developing his fleet further and seeking to establish an alliance of the Christian Powers against the Turks. For the latter purpose he sent a "Grand Embassy" to a number of European courts. The Embassy included Peter himself as "Corporal Peter Mikhailov." Peter did not achieve his aim, as the European Powers were unwilling to go to war with Turkey, but he learned a great deal. In Holland he worked for four months as a common labourer at a large shipyard. But, convinced that the Dutch did not possess the "theoretical side" of shipbuilding, he crossed over to England and spent a further four months working at the government shipyard in Deptford. It is recorded that he spoke with great affection of

England afterwards and thought it "a much happier life to be an admiral in England than a Tsar in Russia." At Deptford Peter resided at Sayes Court, which had been sublet by its tenant, Captain—later Admiral—Benbow, and which had a backdoor giving easy access to the dockyards—Peter did not like to be stared at by the people. Benbow was scandalized when he discovered the damage done by Peter to his elegant furniture and tidy hedges. He sent an account to the Lords of the Treasury, recovering £350 9s. 6d. One item concerned the locks, all of which were broken—perhaps Peter had been experimenting.

#### THE SWEDISH WARS

On his way home Peter heard that the *streltsy* had again revolted, but he nevertheless interrupted his journey to make an alliance with Augustus, King of Poland (Elector of Saxony), against Sweden. After repressing the *streltsy* with the utmost severity, Peter launched his campaign against Charles XII, which was to last for more than twenty years. By the end of that period, however, Peter had definitely secured an outlet on the Baltic, had laid the foundations of St. Petersburg, which became the new capital, and had also built a naval fort, Kronstadt, to defend the city.

Peter owed much of his success against the Swedes to the fact that he had reorganized his army on a conscription basis and had also secured sufficient money to maintain it, though the means whereby he achieved this—a poll tax on all males,

including serfs and also other heavy imposts—pressed hardly on the common people. With the Turks he was less fortunate, for (also arising from the Northern campaign) he was compelled to renounce Azov and, with it, an outlet on the Black Sea. However, he compensated himself by conquering the western seaboard of the Caspian from Persia (1723), which he needed in order to enter into relations with the East and India.

#### THE COSSACK REVOLT

Peter had one important internal conflict, arising from his attitude to the common people. This was early in his reign (1707) when he demanded of the Don Cossacks that they should extradite any fugitive peasants who came to their territory. Now, while the Cossacks themselves stood for law and order and wanted to raise a barrier against the many "thieves" coming to the Don from other parts, they refused to surrender those who did come. Peter sent troops to search out the fugitives; the Cossacks annihilated them. Peter was obliged to send a large army to suppress the ensuing widespread revolt. The Cossacks were crushed and dispersed.

#### REFORMS

Peter introduced many beneficial reforms. On his return from the West he began to establish textile mills and other industrial undertakings and initiated steps to exploit the country's natural resources, such as minerals in the Urals, coal in South Russia, etc. He also reorganized local govern-

ment, dividing the country into eight *gubernias* or "governments," with a governor at the head of each and a Chief Magistrate at the head of each town. The privileges of the nobility were curtailed. Thus Peter changed the former centralized bureaucracy that had ruled the country from Moscow into a de-centralized system. Peter also did everything in his power in the interests of education. In 1703 he founded the first Russian newspaper, the "Moscow News" ("Moskovskia Vedomosti"). In 1724 he created an Academy of Sciences to promote scientific research. Peter attached considerable importance to manners, and the refinements of social intercourse. Early in his reign he forbade the nobles to wear long coats (caftans) and also banned beards—except with a "beard licence." This rule did not apply to the clergy and peasantry. The upper classes were compelled to give "parties" after the Western model. Peter ordered a book of etiquette entitled "The Honourable Youth's Mirror, or the Rules of Worldly Manners" to be translated and published. He himself organized all sorts of celebrations in order to give the people an opportunity to practise their newly acquired manners.

#### VALUE OF PETER'S ACHIEVEMENTS

The rather bitter verdict of some Russian historians on Peter's achievements is that he made Russia into a European country at the cost of ruining her. There is truth in both parts of this judgment.



At the time of his accession Russia—at any rate in the eyes of Europe—was a semi-Asiatic empire, far behind her Western neighbours in most respects. At the time of his death Russia had a “window” in the Baltic and the prestige of a Great Power. But the cost in blood and treasure was enormous. The building of St. Petersburg and Kronstadt was carried out with an utter disregard for human life.

The colossal energy with which he overcame obstacles might have served as an example to his people, had it been tempered with wisdom. As it was it only aroused antagonism, even in his own son.

As regards his attempt to industrialize Russia, it is doubtful whether Peter achieved anything of value. At the beginning of his reign the situation was that Russia's domestic and partly also her foreign trade bore a handicraft character. The Russians excelled in making leather goods of all kinds and also edged articles from iron and steel. So skilled were the Russian workers that they were highly praised by foreigners—and also feared, for they had the reputation that they were able to imitate any new article “after having merely glanced at it” and were also able to produce it more cheaply than the foreigners. Besides handicraft goods the Russians also exported grain, caviare, salmon and furs. Had all this been encouraged, or at least allowed to develop on its own, Russian trade might in due course have attained a measure of prosperity. But Peter's furious energy drove him to force the pace. He started new industries

himself, imported foreign experts to do the same, ordered his own subjects to be more enterprising, conferred monopolies and other privileges and even went so far as to decree changes in old established industries. This rapid industrialization was based almost entirely on serf labour, while the exchange of goods became the special preserve of a sort of commercial bureaucracy, the *goss*s and their subordinates. Soon after Peter's death most of the artificially fostered industries collapsed, and all that remained was the principle of serf labour for industry.

At the same time, Peter undoubtedly succeeded in "waking up" his country to the need for progress and in rendering stagnation impossible. Therein, probably, lay his greatness. The title "The Great" was officially conferred upon him by the Senate of Moscow.

### DOMESTIC LIFE

In his domestic life of Peter was far from ideal. He put away his first wife and handed his son, Alexis, over to his aunts. The boy grew up in an atmosphere that was hostile to Peter and his "foreign" ideas, and he came to dislike his father. When he grew up he renounced the throne—and fled to Germany. Peter had him lured back to Russia and an investigation revealed that Alexis was in a plot against Peter. He was sentenced to death, though the sentence was never carried out.

In 1712 Peter married Catherine Alexeievna, a woman of humble origin who had been taken

prisoner at the time of one of the Swedish wars. Peter was happy with her and had her crowned in 1724. They had two daughters, Anna and Elizabeth. Among the members of his family were also his two nieces, daughters of his brother Ivan, so that at his death (January 28, 1725) the imperial family consisted entirely of women, except for the Tsarevich Alexis.

#### THE PERIOD OF THE FAVOURITES

Peter the Great had left the succession undetermined. His grandson Peter—son of Alexis—was only ten years of age, and none of the female members of the family seemed to have a particularly good claim. The matter was decided by a sort of Privy Council of able men with whom Peter the Great had surrounded himself. This body included men of un-aristocratic lineage and it was at the proposal of one of them, Menshikov, that Catherine was put on the throne—he having been clever enough to have a regiment of soldiers appear at a psychological moment during the deliberations.

This was the beginning of the period of favourites which lasted from 1725 to 1741. Menshikov became the power behind the throne, though a regular Supreme Privy Council had been appointed. Catherine did as she was bid by Menshikov—and it was probably he who arranged for her humble relations to be brought to Moscow; Peter the Great would not allow them to visit her. After Catherine's death (1727) the throne went to Peter II, then aged twelve, for whom first Menshikov,

then a boyar, Prince Dolgoruki, acted as Regent. However, Peter died almost immediately after his coronation in 1730. The succession was now again in question, but finally Anna, Ivan's daughter and niece of Peter the Great, was brought back from Courland (where she was married) and placed on the throne.

#### BIRENISM

There followed a terrible period for the Russian people, for Anna ruled entirely through German friends and favourites she had brought with her. The most powerful of the favourites was von Biren. For ten long years von Biren—and of course other imported Germans—"squeezed the country dry" and anyone who dared to complain was dragged off to the "Secret Chancellery" to be tortured and otherwise punished. Von Biren was afraid of insurrections and in order to avert them he developed a regular system of spies and informers, who had a free hand as to whom to arrest and how to exact retribution. Meanwhile, the court lived in luxury and extravagance. Anna died in 1740, leaving the throne to Ivan, the infant son of her niece, with von Biren as Regent. However, the Russians had had enough of him. He was arrested and so, later, were the Emperor Ivan and his parents. The nobles proclaimed Elizabeth, daughter of Peter the Great, Empress of All the Russias. The downfall of the Germans was hailed with general rejoicing.

This was the end of the period of favourites.

The most significant outcome of this period was the confirmation of the influence of the nobility, as against that of the boyars. For it was they who on each occasion, tipped the scales.

During the reign of Anna Russia acquired large territories in the steppes to the north of the Black Sea, but not the right to maintain a navy in that sea.

#### EMPRESS ELIZABETH

Empress Elizabeth was a kindly woman, though she understood little about politics. When she ascended the throne she immediately removed all the influential Germans from their offices and exiled some. Despite of all they had done none were executed. Otherwise Elizabeth left the running of the government to the Senate. This system prevented any one individual from gaining control and if the Empress had any favourites among this body, they were no less indolent than she herself. Domestically, there were no great changes. Universities were established at Moscow and St. Petersburg. Government banks made money available at six per cent interest, and internal customs barriers were removed. Elizabeth consistently refused to confirm the death penalty. The situation of the nobles was improved, inasmuch as nobility ceased to be linked with service to the State, but only with noble lineage. The court and society, of course, had by now assumed Western customs and manners and the nobility lived in luxury.

#### OCCUPATION OF BERLIN

In the sphere of foreign affairs Elizabeth's reign

was very notable because it included the period of the Seven Years War, in which Russia was allied with Austria against Prussia. In 1758-60 the Russian armies occupied Eastern Prussia and invaded Brandenburg. In 1759 the Russians, not far from Frankfort, almost annihilated the Prussians and just missed capturing Frederick, their King. In 1760 Russian troops occupied Berlin and imposed a heavy tribute.

### PETER III

It is impossible to say what course Prussian history might not have taken had the war continued. But this time Prussia was saved by the sudden death of Elizabeth, which occurred on Christmas Day, 1761. Her successor, Peter III, immediately brought the war to an end, returned to Frederick everything that had been taken from him and concluded with him not only a treaty of peace, but also one of alliance. Peter was the son of Anna, Elizabeth's sister, who had married the Duke of Holstein. He was born in Germany and had spent his boyhood there. Elizabeth had brought him to Moscow early in her reign, when he was fourteen years old, but he was not interested in things Russian and was a great admirer of Frederick. In 1745 Peter married Sophia Augusta, a petty German princess, who was taken into the Orthodox Church as Catherine. The couple had one son, Paul, who was brought up under the personal charge of the Empress Elizabeth.

Peter and Catherine, in their different ways,

were both "Fifth Columnists" of Frederick. Actually, however, Peter possessed less than normal intelligence, was coarse in his manners and addicted to drink and other vices; while Catherine proved to be a woman of brilliant intellect and had nothing but contempt for her husband. Also, whereas Peter frequently shocked the religious and traditional sensibilities of the Russians, as when he celebrated the news of Elizabeth's death by getting dead drunk, Catherine made every possible effort to appear to be a pious Orthodox and a respecter of all things Russian, and at the death of the Empress she behaved as a decent woman should. From the outset the Russians feared that Peter would re-introduce the German régime and, in any case, it was generally known that he was unfit to govern, so a conspiracy in favour of Catherine developed, with Catherine herself as an active participant.

Peter having instituted divorce proceedings against Catherine, she lived separately at Peterhof, outside St. Petersburg, both before and after Peter's accession. On June 28, 1762, she was secretly conveyed to St. Petersburg and proclaimed Empress, with her son, Grand Duke Paul, as her heir. All the troops took the oath to her and the people rejoiced. On the evening of June 28 Catherine, at the head of the troops, marched against Peter, who thereupon abdicated. He was sent out of St. Petersburg, pending a decision as to his fate, but he saved Catherine the trouble of having to make a decision by getting himself killed in a drunken brawl.

## CHAPTER IX

### CATHERINE II—EXPANSION OF SERFDOM AND ARISTOCRATIC PRIVILEGES

CATHERINE II was undoubtedly a remarkable woman and her reign was one of the most remarkable in the history of Russia. One of her most valuable gifts was the power to detect ability in others and to surround herself with the right men. At first, of course, the various cliques were convinced that they had to deal with a young and inexperienced woman and there were many intrigues by groups and individuals to gain her favour. But Catherine had read deeply, thought deeply and was shrewdly observant and she soon established herself as mistress. (The story of her erotic favourites is irrelevant here.)

To deal with her more serious errors first, under Catherine the position of the nobility was considerably improved, while that of the serfs was rendered even more intolerable. The nobles were relieved of all State service, were exempted from conscription, as well as from taxation, and were also granted many positive privileges, so that, in fact, they became the drones of Russian society. As to the



serfs, Catherine at first seemed inclined to do something, and even encouraged some sections of the city population and the nobles who wished to raise the question. But she herself presented her friends with crown lands with about a million serfs. During her reign serfdom was legalized even where it had not existed before (Little Russia) and the landowner secured the right to deport his serfs to Siberia for "mutiny." She herself exiled to Siberia a noble who, on his return from abroad, published a book containing sharp comments on the system of serfdom. The situation at this time was that the landowners were absolute masters of the serfs, selling and buying them like cattle; the children of serfs could be traded for a few copecks.

#### THE PUGACHEV REVOLT

It was this situation that gave rise to the famous Pugachev revolt ( 1773 ). As mentioned earlier, the independence of the Don Cossacks had been crushed by Peter the Great and under his reign they scattered in all directions. A proportion of them settled along the River Ural. It was here that Pugachev, one of the fugitive Don Cossacks, started his movement, gathering an army of serfs, miners, Tartars and other discontented nationalities. As this army moved into the Volga Valley it was joined by thousands of serfs and soon the countryside was ablaze with burning manor houses, factories and government offices, and the air filled with the cries of tortured nobles, merchants and imperial officials. Pugachev occupied and sacked one town

after another, including Khazan. Catherine sent General Bibikov against Pugachev, but it was not until 1775 that he was finally put down by the famous General Suvorov, whom Catherine specially recalled from the Turkish front. The failure of the revolt was a death blow to the free Cossacks, for every vestige of their former independence was now destroyed and they were forced to serve as a frontier militia under Tsarist officers.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF PUGACHEV REVOLT

Pugachev's revolt was far more than a peasant rising. It was, in fact, a social revolution almost in the modern sense and would probably have succeeded but for Pugachev's own vagueness as to his aims and his ignorance of the extent of the support that was awaiting him in Moscow. Actually, Pugachev united under his banner not only peasants and Cossacks, but also the industrial workers, and he could further have counted on the help and sympathy of other "under-dogs," had he but known. Pokrovsky, the famous Soviet historian, quotes a contemporary writer as saying:

"In Moscow the serfs and factory hands and all the numerous population walk the streets almost openly manifesting their rebellious disposition and their sympathy with the Pretender who, as they say, is bringing them coveted freedom."

The industrial working class, of course, was very small. Yet it was the workers of the Ural iron mines and iron works who supplied Pugachev with cannon and cannon balls and other weapons which

gave Pugachev a technical superiority over Catherine's troops. "If Pugachev had begun a march on Moscow," writes Pokrovsky, "he might have met with complete success; the factory workers in Tula and Moscow were ready to rise."

However, Pugachev did not seem to know this. That, in addition, he had no very definite aims for a political transformation is clear from the fact that he gave out that he was Peter III. He said that his "wife" and the nobles had failed to kill him and that he had escaped. He signed manifestos in the name of Peter III calling for the extermination of the nobility and making all sorts of promises. Thus his idea was not to abolish the autocracy. All he wanted was a "good autocrat."

At all events, Catherine's first attempts to suppress Pugachev failed and the fact that she was obliged to recall the Commander-in-Chief of her army from a foreign front is the measure of the seriousness of the revolt and the menace it held for Catherine and the autocracy.

#### ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

Catherine's administrative reforms were largely based on her "Instructions," a large work that was published in Russian, French, German and Latin, and the "Instructions," in turn, were based on her reading of Montesquieu and other French authors. The reforms included improvements in municipal administration in the towns, the raising of the status of the urban population, the establishment of courts of justice and

even of departments of social welfare. In the matter of education Catherine was very far ahead of her time, as witness her remark, with reference to Peter the Great's emphasis on practical education, that "A mind that is merely adorned with or enlightened by science does not yet make a good and honest citizen. . . the root of all evil and good is in character training"—which is the modern English principle of education. Catherine wanted to bring up "a new breed, new fathers and mothers" in the educational institutions. She founded boarding schools for boys and girls of the upper classes and also had plans to establish public elementary and secondary schools open to all classes, but failed in the latter project for lack of funds. Russian literature also flourished under Catherine II. She was a writer herself and encouraged writers, poets, historians and even journalists. The last years of Lomonosov, the father of Russian science, fell in the early reign of Catherine, and many writers and poets of various ranks achieved fame during this period. Catherine was also the first Russian ruler to introduce measures in the interests of public health. At the beginning of her reign there was an epidemic in Central Russia and a riot arose from the people's insistence on praying instead of taking hygienic precautions. By the end of her reign a kind of medical service had been established and Catherine was herself vaccinated as an example to her people.

## ANNEXATION OF THE CRIMEA

Catherine had various wars on her hands throughout her reign. One series of wars was with Turkey, the final result being that the Crimea was annexed to Russia. This gave Russia not only a vast new fertile territory north of the Black Sea, but also complete control of the northern shores of that sea. Prince Potemkin, a man of great ability, was appointed to govern this "New Russia." He built a strong navy, fortified Sevastopol, erected fortresses at the mouth of several rivers and brought Russian settlers, chiefly nobles with their serfs, to the new areas. Catherine herself paid a visit to this domain and it is said that Potemkin exercised a great deal of showmanship—at the expense of the common people—to make the visit enjoyable for her. At this point Turkey attacked the Russians and Potemkin was in danger of losing the new conquests, but the situation was saved by the arrival of General Suvorov, whose very name put new heart into the Russian army. For Suvorov had risen from the ranks and was very popular.

## PARTITION OF POLAND

Another series of armed conflicts concerned Poland. Arising from internecine strife among the Polish nobles on religious and other matters, Catherine sent an army to Warsaw and established a sort of protectorate over Poland. Later she sent another army to suppress the revolt of the Haidamaks, roving peasant bands in many respects like the Cossacks of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,

and also to deal with so-called confederacies of the Polish nobles. In this war Austria and Prussia were also involved and after the defeat of the confederacies Poland was partitioned between the three Powers (1773). In 1793 there was a second partition. In a special manifesto it was explained that the anarchy in Poland had grown to be such a menace and was so clearly related to the French Revolution that Russia, Austria and Prussia saw no other way of restoring order than by narrowing down the boundaries of the country. A third partition followed in 1795, after the failure of a heroic national movement led by Kosciuszko (who was himself captured). Russia now took Lithuania and Courland, having at the second partition already acquired the part of the Ukraine situated on the right bank of the Dnieper and other territories in the West.

Catherine had, in a sense, completed the work begun by Peter the Great. She herself was officially offered the title "The Great" (by a representative assembly in Moscow), but she never made use of it.

An incident of Catherine's reign that deserves mention is the massacre of a large number of Jewish children in the Government of Kiev by Gonta the Cossack. This is one of the most appalling stories in Russian history; it has been immortalized in a realistic poem by the poet Shevchenko.

An incident of a different kind relates to Catherine's attempt to marry her granddaughter Alexandra (Paul's daughter) to King Gustavus IV of Sweden. The young King came to St. Petersburg

and all arrangements were made, but at the last moment, while the bride and the Empress were actually waiting for the marriage ceremony to begin he changed his mind and did not appear—he objected to a religious stipulation in the marriage contract submitted for his signature.

#### EMPEROR PAUL

Paul was born in 1754. From the first he lived separated from and had no love for his mother, while Catherine on her part displayed little interest in him. As Paul grew older a strong antagonism developed between these two. Paul held Catherine responsible for his father's death and also disapproved of her liberal ideas and acts. His son Alexander, by a German princess, was taken away by Catherine, who intended to bequeath the throne to him, not to Paul. At this time Paul was continually insulted and humiliated at court and he finally withdrew to his estate, where he spent his time "training to death" a few hundred soldiers. When, at the age of forty-two, he ascended the throne, he was a broken man, physically as well as mentally.

#### REACTION AND REPRESSION

He began his reign by dismissing or exiling Catherine's counsellors and determining to change her system of government, his idea being to restore autocratic rule. The army he endeavoured to treat in the same way as he had treated his "toy" soldiers, drilling the soldiers to the point of exhaustion and punishing them until they bled. Officers who

found themselves unable to meet the new exactions of military service were sent to Siberia. Paul was terrified of the influence of the French Revolution and forbade under severe penalties the use or mention of anything associated with it. Russians were forbidden to go abroad and foreigners could not come to Russia without a special permit. Importation of literature, as well as musical scores was banned. "Freethinkers" were punished with such severity that Paul's reign has been called the "Reign of Terror."

In time the Tsar's violent rages assumed a plainly pathological character and he became a danger to his own family. A conspiracy was organized by Count Pahlen, Military Governor of St. Petersburg, to force him to abdicate, but when the plotters arrived at the palace Paul resisted and was killed (1801).

Strangely enough, Paul had tried to introduce at least one "liberal" measure. In 1797 he issued a decree which said that serfs could not be forced to work for their masters more than three days a week—but gifts of land he made to individual nobles resulted in reducing some 600,000 crown peasants to serfdom.

#### WAR WITH NAPOLEON

Paul's foreign policy was chiefly concerned with Napoleon. Napoleon had conquered Holland, Belgium, most of Italy, Switzerland and was preparing to invade Egypt, and he was setting up democratic governments everywhere. That was



a menace to the Europe of that time, and especially Russia, and Paul joined in the coalition against the French. His navy gave some trouble to Napoleon in the Mediterranean (where he had occupied the Russian Protectorate of Malta), while the Russian army, under Suvorov, fought Napoleon with success on land. Suvorov's epic march across the mountains of Switzerland evoked the admiration of the whole world. Soon after this incident Paul broke off the alliance with Austria and England and after 1800 Russia made peace with the French, particularly on account of the great humanity displayed by Napoleon in the treatment of Russian prisoners of war.

## CHAPTER X

### ALEXANDER I AND THE "HOLY ALLIANCE"— NICHOLAS I

ALEXANDER I, who became known as "the Blessed," reigned from 1801 to 1825. He was brought up under the care of Catherine II, who appointed a Swiss, La Harpe, as his tutor. La Harpe and Alexander became great friends and as the former was a liberal and republican, he influenced Alexander in favour of a democratic government. Alexander was kindly, with charming manners and a perpetual cheerfulness. But behind this there was the power of dissimulation, which developed through his uncomfortable position between Catherine and his father who, not unnaturally, was afraid of him.

#### ATTEMPTS AT REFORM

When he ascended the throne Alexander liberated all who had been imprisoned under the reign of his father without a proper trial and also recalled many exiles. The administration of the country he entrusted to officials of Catherine's time, restoring the powers of the Senate and appointing eight departmental Ministers. He also had a small "committee" of idealistic friends. This com-

mittee devoted some thought to the improvement of the condition of the serfs, but all that came of it was a law permitting the landowners to free their serfs and provide them with land. Fewer than 50,000 serfs were thus liberated during the twenty-five years of Alexander's reign. Other internal reforms, introduced by Alexander under the influence of a remarkable man, Speranski, also fell to the ground as the Tsar became increasingly timid or reactionary.

#### ALLIANCE WITH NAPOLEON

Alexander, like his father, was obliged to fight against Napoleon and he did so, at first, in alliance with Austria and England. However, in 1805 his army was heavily defeated at Austerlitz and again, in 1807, near Friedland, Napoleon having previously conquered nearly the whole of Prussia. The two Emperors met on a raft on the River Niemen and made peace. One of the terms obliged Alexander to adhere to Napoleon's "Continental System," that is, Russia was to have no commercial relations with England. Alexander then fought Sweden for her refusal to join the alliance against England and annexed Finland. Meanwhile, Alexander had been engaged in a war with Turkey since 1806. The end of this came in 1812, when Russia obtained Bessarabia.

#### ALLIANCE WITH ENGLAND AND DEFEAT OF NAPOLEON

The alliance with the French went very much

against the grain with the Russians. The rupture of commercial relations with England injured not only private traders, but also the State. In addition, the unconventional and self-assured behaviour of the members of the French Embassy at St. Petersburg also aroused resentment. Trade—and the alliance—with England was resumed. By 1811 war with France was considered inevitable, and Alexander began to prepare. In June, 1812, Napoleon crossed the Niemen with an army of 600,000 men and after a halt at Vilna, marched on Smolensk and Moscow. The Russian strategy was withdrawal—in order to draw the enemy as far away as possible from his base; and in addition to withdrawal there was a policy of what is to-day called “scorched earth,” so that the enemy should find no supplies to requisition. On the 26th August, 1812, the Russians fought a sanguinary, but indecisive battle with Napoleon near Borodino, then they resumed their retreat. Napoleon occupied Moscow on September 2. But hardly had he settled down when the city was set on fire and almost completely destroyed. Napoleon waited for some weeks, thinking that the Russians would now make peace with him, but his attempts to open negotiations failed. About the middle of October Napoleon began the Great Retreat. He was obliged to keep to the “hungry route” by which he had come because the path southward, towards Kaluga, was blocked by the Russian army, which fell on him whenever a favourable opportunity offered. In addition, there were the Russian

guerillas, for the patriotism of the population had been aroused and they attacked and harried the French at every possible point. The Grande Armée soon became just a mob in flight and while they were overburdened with valuable loot they lacked the barest necessities. Perhaps their worst enemy, however, was the cold. The winter was unusually early (as in 1941) and the French had not reckoned with the possibility that the conquest of Russia would take them so long that they would need warm clothes. At all events, they froze or starved to death by the thousand, while the Russians, both regulars and guerillas, accounted for more thousands and Napoleon finally reached Vilna with a miserable remnant of his magnificent army.

#### THE "HOLY ALLIANCE"

After Napoleons defeat at Leipzig (1813) Alexander, with the King of Prussia, made a solemn entry into Paris and Napoleon was banished to the Island of Elba. On Alexander's return to St. Petersburg, the State Council, the Holy Synod and the Senate bestowed on him the title "the Blessed."

After Waterloo Alexander conceived the idea of the Holy Alliance, to include European Powers. The act of the Holy Alliance (1815) declared that the allied sovereigns had resolved to subject the system "to the supreme truths dictated by the eternal law of God the Saviour" and to be guided in their political relations "by no other rules but the commandments of this sacred faith, the com-<sup>a</sup>

mandments of love, truth and peace." The sovereigns bound themselves to live in perpetual peace and to govern their subjects "as fathers of their families," etc. Of course, the terms of the alliance were not observed by anybody, though Alexander exerted himself a great deal for the pacification of Europe.

#### BRUTAL RULE

At home Alexander at this period surrounded himself with foreign advisers and also with some queer people. Generally, towards the end of his reign he became strange. Some of his counsellors were reactionaries and a time came when he left the government of the country to a member of this group, Count Arakcheev. The latter, a domineering and brutal man, managed to impress Alexander as honest and devoted and the Tsar would not listen to any complaints against him. Arakcheev created "military colonies," composed of crown peasants and soldiers of the regular army. The men were forced to spend all their time either working on the land or drilling and even their wives were chosen for them by their officers. The idea, of course, was to maintain the army with little expense. Prince Golitsyn, another favourite of Alexander's, whose piety caused him to view education with suspicion, was placed in charge of educational and ecclesiastical affairs. He set out to combat "the subtle poison of disbelief and hatred for the legitimate authorities," thereby poisoning education and fostering, instead of piety, hypocrisy and deceit. Golit-

syn, of course, considered a severe censorship essential.

The oppressive rule of Arakcheev and others like him aroused a great deal of discontent. Some groups of nobles who had visited France and England and had absorbed new ideas formed a Union of Salvation, aiming at a revolution in Russia. The Union was divided into two sections, a Northern and a Southern. Their views as to what was to follow a successful revolution differed somewhat, but they were agreed as to the need for the revolution itself. The Northern Union was in St. Petersburg and was led by a Prince Trubetskoi and the poet Ryleev, while the Southern Union was headed by Colonel Pestel, who was with the army in South Russia. Alexander knew about this movement, yet he refused to permit Arakcheev to suppress it.

#### THE TRUTH ABOUT ALEXANDER

Though Alexander I's personal character is of little importance, it is interesting to note that according to modern Russian historians his kindliness and charm were merely a cloak for a hypocrisy of a most sinister kind, and it is said that he himself was involved in the plot that culminated in his father's death.

As to his political activities, even a cursory examination of the facts will show that his "democratic" and "idealistic" intentions amounted to precisely nothing and that, on the contrary, as far as his internal policy was concerned he was a reactionary of the worst type, though, consistently

with his hypocritical character, he arranged matters so that the oppression of the people should be carried out by his instruments "without his knowledge."

In his foreign policy, of course, his hypocrisy took a more open form. The effect of his activities after the defeat of Napoleon was to dethrone democracy everywhere and strengthen reaction. The "Holy Alliance" was a very monument of international hypocrisy. One of its consequences was to make Russia into the gendarme of Europe for the suppression of liberty wherever it dared to raise its head. There can be little doubt that Alexander I was ultimately responsible for the moves of his son and successor in this direction.

#### THE DECEMBRISTS

The Union of Salvation got their chance in December, 1825, soon after the death of Alexander, when there was considerable confusion in connection with the succession. They started propaganda among the troops and urged them not to take the oath to the new Tsar, Nicholas, Alexander's brother, and to demand a Constitution. Two regiments marched to the Senate building, where they were joined by some sailors, but owing to a series of misunderstandings the leaders failed to arrive and the revolt was drowned in blood. Almost at the same time the Southern Union also tried to organize a military revolt, but they too were suppressed. A large number of the Decembrists (so called on account of the month of the attempt) were sentenced to death, but Nicholas I confirmed only



five of these sentences and commuted the rest to exile in Siberia.

#### NICHOLAS I

Nicholas, who was nearly twenty years younger than Alexander, had lived away from the court with his family and spent his time playing soldiers. At some time, however, Alexander dropped a hint to him that "a great destiny awaited him" and Nicholas began to read and study, but he had no practical experience of government when he ascended the throne.

The conclusion he drew from the events of the 14th December was that the nobility were unreliable and he therefore established a bureaucratic and autocratic government, ignoring the nobility. Actually, a very considerable proportion of this class were involved in the attempted revolution and the majority had reason to fear persecution in this connection, so they withdrew from public life and formed a silent opposition to Nicholas.

The most important acts of Nicholas included the removal of the notorious Arakcheev and other favourites of Alexander and the recall of the brilliant Speranski. Under the direction of the latter a Code of Laws of the Russian Empire was compiled, on the basis of previous Russian legislation, the temptation to adapt foreign laws being resisted.

Under Nicholas I the country's finances, left in chaos by Alexander, were put in order by the withdrawal of old, depreciated and confusing paper issues.

## “TOKEN LIBERATION OF SERFS

Something—though little—was at last done for the serfs. Nicholas thought that the liberation of all the serfs—eleven millions—would be dangerous both socially and politically, but he did intend to tackle the problem. Speranski suggested that if the government gave a lead on its own estates private landowners would follow and the necessary gradualness would be ensured. This was approved and the matter was placed in the hands of Count Kiselev, who became Minister of State Properties (1837) and formed the peasants of the crown lands into rural communes (6,000 of them) and several communes into “townships” (*volosti*) and they were granted the right to elect their own heads and elders, to have courts of justice and generally to administer their own local affairs. But Kiselev did not stop there, for he also arranged for the peasants to receive instruction in better farming methods, as well as grain in times of crop failure. It was a great achievement and undoubtedly to the credit of Kiselev and all concerned.

Unfortunately, little was done for the serfs on the private estates, scarcely more than another permissive law to emancipate them. The landowners did not make use of it and one is driven to the conclusion that the reason was simply that they wished to retain their power over the serfs at all costs, even at the cost of their own ruin. For serfdom was not a paying proposition. In good years there was no profit for the landowners; in bad years they fell into debt. It has been esti-

mated that under Nicholas I's reign more than half of the serfs themselves were mortgaged! Seven millions of them! In addition to the unprofitableness of serfdom, there was continual unrest, for the serfs natually heard about the crown peasants.

#### THE NEW INTELLIGENTSIA

Nicholas I's educational policy led to the rise of a new intelligentsia. Up till then none but the upper classes had an opportunity of education; now there arose a middle class intelligentsia. At the same time, education was rigidly supervised to guard against the spread of revolutionary ideas, particularly after the revolutionary movements of 1848. The slightest suspicion that a citizen had lost "the integrity of opinion" brought down severe punishment upon him without any sort of trial.

Nicholas I's wars included the annexation of Georgia, a Christian country which had suffered a great deal from the Persians. The war with Persia lasted from 1826-1828, but was followed by a long-drawn religious war against Russia by Moslem mountain tribes.

#### LIBERATION OF BALKAN PEOPLES

The Turkish War (1828-29) was the outcome of the Greek War of Independence against Turkey, which started at the time of Alexander I. In 1827 Russia helped England and France to defeat the Turkish navy, and for this Turkey attacked Russia in 1828. As a result of this war Greece was

liberated, while Moldavia and Wallachia (Rumania) and Serbia were granted complete internal autonomy and came under the protectorate of Russia. However, this Russian influence declined later.

In 1831 Russia crushed a Polish rebellion and thereafter endeavoured to Russify the Poles, as well as the Lithuanians.

#### THE CRIMEAN WAR

The Crimean War (1853-1855), one of the most famous conflicts in Russian history, ostensibly arose from a quarrel between Russia and Turkey over holy places in Palestine,—concessions having been granted to the Catholic clergy to the detriment of the Orthodox. Actually, however, there were deeper causes. Nicholas I was too eager to help anywhere to crush a revolution. He helped Turkey herself against the Egyptians. He crushed the Hungarians at a mere request from the Emperor Francis Joseph. And he was generally a meddler in all such matters, always against liberty. That was why England and France may be said—roughly—to have allied themselves with Turkey against Russia.

Meanwhile, the discontent of the new intelligentsia in Russia was growing, though open expressions of opinion were impossible. Hence the tendency of the intelligentsia was against the Tsar and his autocratic bureaucracy, so that the government lost the advantage of the services of able men and was really run by mediocrities.

Perhaps the most sinister result of Nicholas

I's reign lay in the fact that he had definitely established the rule of the police spy and informer and had driven political thought and, indeed, intellectual development, underground; he had introduced a system that caused intelligence and education to be associated with revolution.

## CHAPTER XI

### ALEXANDER II—LIBERATION OF THE SERFS

ALEXANDER II, Nicholas I's son and successor, was an entirely different man from his father both in character and education. Alexander was a man of gentle disposition, and he had also been systematically trained for his high office. When he came to the throne (1855) he was aged thirty-six and was a mature and experienced man of affairs, having for ten years worked under Nicholas.

His first task was to end the Crimean War. Though Sevastopol had fallen, the Russians had won a brilliant victory by capturing Kars, in Asia, so Alexander thought he could start peace negotiations on a more or less equal footing. The Treaty of Paris (1856) enabled him to turn his attention to domestic reforms that he had long planned.

### EMANCIPATION OF THE SERFS

One of the most important was the emancipation of the serfs, which was put into effect in 1861. Alexander made his attitude clear immediately after the Crimean War, when he remarked to a

gathering of the nobility at Moscow that it was "better to abolish serfdom from above than wait till it abolishes itself from below." But the introduction of the measure was delayed by a lack of unanimity among the various parties concerned. It was suggested that emancipation should be gradual. This the Emperor opposed. Then it was proposed that the peasants should not be given any land. The Emperor (and his family) did not approve. Finally it was decided that the liberated serfs should be entitled to buy from the landowners their own homesteads (small plot of land comprising their cottages and gardens) and a so-called field portion, that is, an extra piece of land. Otherwise the organization of the peasants—who would now become peasant proprietors—was to be roughly the same as that of the crown peasants liberated under Nicholas I. In order to make the transaction possible immediately, the government established a fund, out of which the landowners were paid for the land ceded to the peasants, who were to repay the money in the course of forty-nine years. For liberating the serfs and renouncing their free services the landowners received no compensation.

#### PROBLEMATIC BENEFITS

Now, this undoubtedly represented a tremendous advance. But the briefest examination of the facts will show that the vast majority of the peasants were not benefited to any very considerable extent. Firstly, the determination of the size of the land

ceded to the peasants was complicated by differences in fertility. Secondly, the landowners naturally strove to retain some hold over the peasants and the land allocated to them was therefore frequently so situated that they were obliged to pay the landowners to allow them access to water, meadows, woods, etc.; it was the same as regards draught animals and implements. Thirdly, the peasants began with a heavy debt, in addition to the obligation to pay taxes to the State and render services to the landowners. And fourthly, no land was apportioned to those peasants who had been servants on the large estates, so that they were still bound to the landowners, who could pay them what wages they chose. That the lot of the peasants was not very substantially improved may be gathered from the fact that after forty years they were still heavily in arrears with their repayments to the State.

#### UNREST

It is understandable, in the circumstances, that the liberation of the peasants should almost immediately have been followed by a general sense of dissatisfaction. Many members of the intelligentsia realized the problematic nature of the benefits inflicted (so to speak) on the peasants and started an agitation for better terms. Some of them, including the famous Chernishevsky, were imprisoned or exiled to Siberia. Of course, the liberated serfs were in the power not only of the landowners, but also of the *koulaks*, rich peasants who had been free before and who demanded



extortionate payment, in kind or in the form of service, for the loan of draught animals and implements. All this deserves to be borne in mind, though it does not detract from the importance of the reform and does not imply that it was without any benefit to the people as a whole.

#### LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

Alexander II also granted a large measure of local self-government to the people. The system was, roughly, as follows: Villages or communes headed by a *starosta* or headman; a number of villages formed a *volost*; a number of *volosts* constituted a district, which was administered by a District Zemstvo Board; a number of districts made up a government, which had a Provincial Zemstvo Assembly. The towns had their councils. All classes were granted the vote and *starostas*, elders, etc., were all elected on democratic lines, at least outwardly. But here again, in practice the nobles and *koulaks* retained a very considerable measure of influence and power and though the people as a whole had local self-government, they were still governed by the old classes.

The most important part, from the peasants' point of view, of Alexander II's judicial reforms was the abolition of certain forms of corporal punishment, such as flogging, branding, running the gauntlet and other similar cruelties.

In the sphere of education Alexander II's reign accomplished a great deal and, in particular, thousands of primary schools were opened all over the

country, But all this was only a drop in the ocean and the low educational level of Russia remained low, with illiteracy the rule rather than the exception. Secondary education in the towns was considerably extended and made available to all classes, but after 1871 this was restricted to classical secondary schools because the Minister of Public Instruction, Count Tolstoy, thought that the rise of Nihilism was due to the study of the natural sciences.

#### NIHILISM

At this point we must explain that the revolutionary movement that was called Nihilism actually arose from the intellectual ferment caused by Alexander's reforms. The progressive intelligentsia felt that the people had been cheated. After the liberation of the serfs and the granting of local self-government they thought that representative political government would follow immediately, with subsequent improvement in the lot of the people. When they found that that was not what Alexander intended, they began to make propaganda among the masses and were persecuted by the government. There were great political trials and severe punishments were inflicted on the revolutionaries, who included many students, but the movement, instead of diminishing, extended at a rapid rate—and so did repression. The Nihilists or Narodniks as they were originally known (*narod* = people), at first fought in the interests of the peasantry. But the peasantry was too backward in all respects to understand and aid them, so they

became revolutionaries without any substantial backing among the people and began to use terroristic methods to achieve their aims, though it appears that they themselves did not quite know what those aims were. At all events, there were assassinations of high officials, hangings, spying and counter-spying, and all the other phenomena of terrorism-cum-repression.

Alexander II also introduced conscription on European lines and organized a truly national army based on discipline; harshness disappeared to a great extent and military service gradually came to be regarded as a patriotic duty.

The consequence of all these changes, but particularly of the liberation of the serfs, was a quickening of the whole of national life. Previously, the serfs and others on an individual estate, grew and made everything they used and had little occasion to go to the towns. Now they became buyers of industrial goods. This led to the development of industry and commerce, the building of roads and railways and to the development of the towns from mere administrative centres into something more. The population of the towns increased and, gradually, an industrial working class developed, with the poorest of the former serfs, especially those who had received no land, seeking employment in the factories. As trade and industry developed a new class of rich and educated people came into existence (parallel with the new proletariat), while the landed nobles began to drift towards bankruptcy, for they could not adjust themselves to a

situation where they had to pay for labour. Many of them were obliged to sell their estates—often to their former serfs.

#### THE POLISH UPRISING

Alexander II endeavoured to treat Poland generously and granted them self-government (1861) and also amnestied Poles who were in exile on account of their participation in the revolt of 1830. But the Polish patriots wanted independence and restoration of Poland's old frontiers and in January, 1863, they rose in revolt. The revolt was suppressed, with much cruelty, by the summer of 1864. Soon after this, Russia set the Polish serfs free, providing them with land for which they did not have to pay—the object being to make them friendly towards the Tsar. Other classes in Poland were treated very differently. The brutal Muraviev, who had crushed the insurrection, set about uprooting Polish influence everywhere, appointed Russian officials to all administrative posts, placed Russian garrisons in the cities, carried on a ruthless campaign against the Polish language and generally did everything possible to Russianize Poland.

#### ASIA AND THE CAUCASUS

Under Alexander's reign Russia conquered vast territories in Central Asia (the Khanates of Bokhara, Khiva and Kokand), regained the Amur territory from China and also acquired, by treaty, half of Sakhalin Island from Japan. (This island contains some valuable oil wells and has been a bone of

contention between Japan and Russia since the 1930's.) Alaska was sold to the United States "for a song" as worthless territory! In the Eastern Caucasus Alexander had to deal with a sort of religious war by mountain tribes led by a Moslem named Shamil. This conflict had been going on for many years before Alexander's accession and Shamil seemed to possess great qualities of leadership, but he was finally defeated and captured (1859). The Western Caucasus, where the Circassians were giving a great deal of trouble, was also pacified.

#### THE TURKISH WAR AND THE BERLIN CONGRESS

Russia's declaration of war on Turkey in 1877 arose from Turkey's atrocious treatment of the Orthodox Christians of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and other Balkan territories who had risen in revolt, in 1875-76. The result of the war was that the Sultan sued for peace, recognized the independence of Montenegro and Serbia, agreed to the formation of a separate Bulgaria, promised reforms in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and ceded Batum and Kars to Russia. However, much of this was changed by the Congress of Berlin (1879) called by the Powers. The Congress as a whole was hostile to Russia and "the honest broker," Bismarck, did everything in his power to deprive Russia of the fruits of her victories. The Balkan countries which Russia had liberated also proved to be ungrateful. To-day two of them—

Rumania and Bulgaria—are on the side of her enemies.

#### ASSASSINATION OF ALEXANDER II

Early in 1880 Alexander applied himself to the preparation of new reforms, planning to admit representatives of the people to the State Council. But the Narodniki were determined to kill him and on March 1, 1881, at the fourth attempt, they succeeded. Alexander was killed by a hand-grenade thrown at his carriage as he was driving along the Catherine Canal in St. Petersburg. It was a stupid and senseless killing.

Alexander's death was followed by the first anti-Jewish pogroms in the modern sense. They took place in many localities in South Russia, including Kiev, Cossack Hetmans having deliberately incited the people on the pretext that the Jews had murdered the Tsar. The police sometimes made efforts to protect the Jews, at others they organized pogroms themselves.

#### ALEXANDER III RETURN TO DESPOTISM

Alexander III, Alexander II's son, who was married to an English princess (a daughter of Queen Victoria), had no liberal ideas. On the contrary, he wanted to suppress all trace of revolutionary movements and strengthen the autocracy. Terrorism—at least as far as the Tsarist family was concerned—ceased, the usual Tsarist measures being adopted to secure that end. The one famous attempt made against the life of Alexander III (1887)

was that in which Alexander Ulyanov, Lenin's brother, was involved; he was hanged. The Tsar placed all kinds of restrictions on the liberal institutions created by his father and, in general, introduced a reactionary régime. The nobility, which was declining, was restored to influence by manipulation of the electoral system in local government and they were given all kinds of well-paid posts. Russification of Poles and Finns and other non-Russians was pursued with ruthless energy, but was resisted as far as possible.

In the economic sphere Alexander was responsible for the introduction of a financial system based on the gold standard and it was under his reign that the Trans-Siberian and Trans-Caspian Railways were built.

In foreign policy Alexander consistently worked for peace and he had only one minor war, against the Afghans (1885). In his younger days he had a great admiration for the Hohenzollerns, but after the Berlin Congress he changed his mind and in view of the Triple Alliance which Germany had concluded with Austria-Hungary and Italy, he concluded a defensive alliance with France.

For the liberated serfs he did nothing. As to the industrial workers, he made a beginning with legislation designed to protect them against the tyranny of the employers, but it was only a beginning. One example will be sufficient to illustrate the situation prevailing at the time. Morozov, a big cotton mill owner at Orekhovo-Zuyevo, who employed 8,000 workers there, had a system of fines

whereby he deducted about a third of their wages. In addition, the hours and conditions of work at the mills were intolerable. This gave rise to the first large scale strike in Russia (1885). Morozov's workers paid for it dearly, for 600 of them were arrested and scores put on trial. But their example was followed by the workers elsewhere, and within a year the Tsarist government considered it necessary to curtail the arbitrary rights of industrial employers.

#### THE FIRST LABOUR UNIONS

By now the Russian workers had a few unions. The South Russian League of Workers was formed in Odessa in 1875. Three years later, the Northern League was formed in St. Petersburg. The Morozov strike had been organized by the latter organization. A group of intellectuals was beginning to preach Marxism and there were also workers' circles where Socialism was studied. Lenin himself went to St. Petersburg in 1893 and organized the workers' circles there into a League, and before his imprisonment and exile to Siberia he was instrumental in forming similar organizations elsewhere.

Alexander III was a man noted for great physical strength and robust health, but actually he suffered from various hereditary complaints. He died suddenly in 1894, at the age of fifty-four.



## CHAPTER XII

### NICHOLAS II—OLIGARCHY OF GRAND DUKES AND PLEHVE WAR AND REVOLUTION

NICHOLAS II ascended the throne in 1894. If his father's rule was reactionary, his own was tyrannous beyond measure and created conditions so utterly inhuman and uncivilized that Russia, despite a bright external facade of prosperity and power at that period, was internally little more than a vast madhouse of oppression, corruption and sadistic cruelty and, at the same time, a realm of ignorance, squalor, starvation, disease and death.

But before we go on to summarize the facts it must be said that Nicholas himself was scarcely responsible for anything that happened in Russia during his reign. He was a member of a (purely German) dynasty that had reached the last phase of degeneracy. Of him personally it is sufficient to say that if he had been an ordinary mortal he would surely have been granted the privilege of life-long seclusion in some quiet place where he would have been relieved of responsibility even in minor matters. Nicholas was from the first completely under the influence of the Dowager Empress, his wife, and his sister Xenia—and also,

long before the advent of the diabolical Rasputin, under the influence of astrologers, hypnotists and even a masseur! These gentry were let loose on him by unscrupulous Ministers in order to defraud him. Perhaps the only thing he did on his own initiative was to invite the Powers to "set a limit to ceaseless armaments and to find a means of averting the calamities that threaten the whole world," which resulted in the calling of the two Hague Conferences (1899 and 1907).

Otherwise Russia was governed by what might be called an Oligarchy composed of the Grand Dukes and a few Ministers, headed by the infamous von Plehve, a Baltic of German descent who had changed his religion twice and who had risen to power through betraying his own uncle and benefactor to the gallows. This Oligarchy had evolved under the reign of Alexander III, and rested on a vast bureaucracy, every member of which, however low in rank, was as autocratic, as ruthless and as corrupt as the Grand Dukes and Plehve himself.

The Grand Dukes—about a dozen of them, uncles, cousins and other relations of the Tsar—drew colossal incomes from the Crown, yet some of them were involved in such swindles as selling some of the Russian army's guns for scrap metal, stealing the contents of registered letters, pocketing the money that had been earmarked for clothes and boots for the Army during the Russo-Japanese war, and even moneys donated to the Red Cross. What the world thought of the Grand Dukes is best illustrated by the case of Grand Duke Boris ;

when he went to America the American Press appealed to President Theodore Roosevelt "not to receive at the White House a personage whose presence would stain the moral repute of his abode!"

### JUSTICE "BY ORDER"

While we are on the subject of corruption: During the period in question there were some sensational cases involving the Minister of Justice, Muraviev, as well as almost the entire Ministry and a considerable portion of the judiciary. Muraviev had introduced a law to the effect that the Minister of Justice was entitled to order the conviction of any accused person, no matter what the evidence! In one case that created a stir even in Russia. Muraviev allied himself with a fraudulent Moscow firm to bring a false charge against a Kharkov banking syndicate, imprison and dispossess the directors and share their fortune of some £800,000. Fifteen members of the lower court, the Court of Appeal and other bodies who collaborated were rewarded with promotion. When the scandal became public the Tsar himself attempted to make Muraviev disgorge, but failed. Muraviev, as a "punishment," was offered the Embassy in Rome! There were thousands and tens of thousands of similar cases on a smaller scale all over Russia. The Minister of Justice himself issued statistics showing that in one year alone some tens of thousands of "politicals" had been convicted "by order." The entire legal system, from top to bottom, was based on blackmail, bribery

and corruption. In at least one case, widely reported in the European Press at the time, a group of mass murderers in South Russia were acquitted, and the relatives of the victims who gave evidence against them severely reprimanded by the judges! Of course, corporal punishment had been re-introduced (it had never been entirely abolished) and in Nicholas II's Russia the knout was a much-used instrument of authority.

#### PLEHVE

Plehve himself shared in the proceeds of all the large-scale frauds. But his chief concern was to keep the people down. Originally he was Chief of Police, but in course of time he became Dictator. Throughout his career, and until his assassination in 1904, he spied on everyone, including his colleagues in the Ministry and the Grand Dukes. Russia was full of spies and informers and blackmail, corruption and brutality were the keynote of police administration. Plehve even kept in touch with the Terrorists, made bargains with them, organized "demonstrations" against the Tsar and punished the demonstrators. In order to be able to keep an eye on the intelligentsia the Government decreed that doctors, lawyers, students, etc., etc. must wear uniform. All intellectual and political activity was driven underground and, for instance, whenever an entertainment was organized by students or members of the intelligentsia the police demanded to see the accounts and made every effort to ascertain to whom the takings went. The Jews were used

by Plehve as the scapegoat whenever there was unrest. Many pogroms were organized by his bureaucracy and, as was widely reported in the European Press at the time, the police frequently stood by, cheering the pogromists.

#### REPRESSION OF NATIONALITIES

Under Nicholas II the nationalities were no less brutally repressed than Russians who dared to have ideas of their own. Armenians, Lithuanians, Poles, Finns who resisted Russification were butchered, exiled, imprisoned. Perhaps the worst case, at least in one sense, was that of the Ruthenians (in the south) who were from one day to another turned into a mute people because the Tsarist Government had forbidden them to use their own language.

#### WRETCHEDNESS OF THE PEASANTRY

As to the mass of the people, their condition under Nicholas II's reign showed how the great Reforms of Alexander II were working out. There were more than 100 million peasants. Agriculture remained backward because the peasants never had a surplus with which to effect improvements. When the harvest was good the prosperous section of the peasantry (exclusive of the *koulaks*) had barely sufficient bread for themselves and their families. For taxes had to be paid with grain and taxation was very heavy ; the thefts of the Grand Dukes, Ministers, generals, admirals and others had to be paid for. In addition, there were the well meant, but nevertheless disastrous experiments of Witte,

the Minister of Finance who, towards the end of Alexander III's reign, had begun to create new industries with foreign loans and had established the gold standard. The industries died before they were born, for the simple reason that taxation was so heavy that the peasantry had nothing left with which to buy industrial goods, apart from the fact that the Russian products were more expensive and less perfect than imported goods. When the harvest was bad, as it frequently was, there was famine and entire regions were depopulated. This was in addition to the *normal* mortality, which was as high as 50 per cent in the case of infants. Housing was far below anything known in Western countries. The peasant family lived in an earth-floored hut consisting of a single room, part of which was occupied by a huge oven. But the "family" included not only husband and wife and children, but also grandparents, uncles and aunts and in-laws, to say nothing of poultry and lambs in the winter. The bed was usually the floor; the region of the oven was occupied by the old people.

What of the commune, the *mir*? Did not the members of a commune get together and help each other? No. Under Nicholas II the sole purpose of the commune was to ensure the collection of taxes. The *starosta*, the headman, was responsible for this, and he was a more cruel tax gatherer even than the official tax collectors, for if any member of the commune failed to pay his share the rest of the commune had to pay more. The peasant could not escape paying the commune share

of taxes even after he had left the commune to become an industrial worker in the towns. For Plehve had decreed that everyone must have a passport, without which he was an outcast, a criminal, and it was in the power of the commune to withdraw a member's passport. So the fugitive's choice lay between sending a considerable portion of his meagre wages to the commune and starving in the town, or returning to the commune and starving there—though in that case he scarcely had to work. In addition to all this, there were the *koulaks*, the usurers, who bled the other peasants without mercy, taking away their land when there was nothing else left to take.

Thus the peasants were ready for revolutionary propaganda—but the system had made sure that propaganda could not reach them. For 89 per cent of the peasantry was illiterate. Indeed, approximately 40 per cent of the priests were also unable to read and write! The best educated class were the nobility. Incidentally, the nobility by now were out of the picture. It was not they who constituted the bureaucracy, but a new bourgeois class.

#### REVOLUTIONARY FERMENT

Of course, revolutionary organization was nevertheless extending, particularly among the growing industrial proletariat, as well as part of the nobility and the commercial classes. Repression increased in proportion, and strikes, for instance, were crushed with the utmost brutality.

## THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

Such were the conditions in Russia when, in January, 1904, she went to war with Japan. The war arose from Russia's occupation of Manchuria, Korea and Port Authur, but could have been avoided had not the Grand Dukes and their entire corrupt clique anticipated advantages for themselves from it. Japan proved far stronger than anyone had thought and Russia was defeated both on land and at sea, the Russian Baltic Fleet having sailed all the way round Africa to the Pacific only to be destroyed. Peace was concluded through the mediation of the President of the United States in August, 1905.

## REVOLUTION

However, the revolution started long before this. Its beginning was marked by the assassination of Plehve. There followed, at various times during the progress of the war, various revolutionary movements. One was the great strike at the Putilov armaments works in St. Petersburg and this soon developed into something like a general strike. On January 9, 1905, a procession of about 140,000 workers, with their wives and children, marched to the Winter Palace to present a petition to the Tsar. They were received with volleys of rifle fire and many of them were killed and wounded. In May there began a well organized strike at the town of Ivanovo-Voznesensk. Here the workers elected deputies to lead the struggle and negotiate with the employers. These deputies constituted



a soviet, or council, and it was at about this time that the term soviet began to be used in the sense in which it is understood to-day.

Other incidents in the Revolution included the mutiny of the crew of the battleship *Potemkin* in the Black Sea, which ended with the murder of the officers. There was also a peasant rising in Central Russia, as well as on the Volga, but this was brutally suppressed.

The culmination of the Revolution came in the autumn of 1905, when there was a general strike and armed insurrection at Moscow, as well as a widespread rebellion among the peasants. In Georgia (under the leadership of Stalin), in the Donetz Basin (where a mechanic named Clement Voroshilov was beginning to attract attention), in the Ukraine, Finland and elsewhere, workers and peasants were in conflict with the police and the military sometimes only for a few hours, sometimes for many days. But in the end the movement was suppressed.

Meanwhile, in October, 1905, the Tsar had issued a Manifesto granting to the nation "the unshakable foundations of civic liberty, freedom from arrest without cause, and freedom of conscience, speech, assembly, and association." But, of course, the shootings, hangings, imprisonments and deportations went on as before, even after the opening of the State Duma (Parliament) in the spring of 1906.

## LENIN

The Revolution failed because it was unorganized and un-directed. But the Russian Bolshevik Party, the instrument that was soon to destroy Tsarism and all it stood for, was already in being, though most of its leading members were in exile.

The cutting edge, the soul of the instrument, was Lenin, grandson of a poor tailor of Astrakhan, who had become a master revolutionary. It was Lenin who created the Bolshevik Party by causing a split in the Russian Social Democratic Party at its crucial second Congress in 1903. The Congress was originally convened to Brussels, but owing to interference on the part of the Belgian police the venue was transferred to London. The vital issue was whether the Social Democratic Party should admit to its ranks anyone who was interested in its ideas, regardless of social origin or willingness to act, or whether—as Lenin insisted—membership should be restricted to people, chiefly workers, who were prepared to submit to a rigid discipline and ready to become, so to speak, professional revolutionaries. The Congress accepted Lenin's view by a narrow majority. The consequence was a schism in the Party, and thenceforth a distinction was drawn between Bolsheviks (the Russian for majority) and Mensheviks (minority).

At the outbreak of the Revolution of 1904-1905 the Bolshevik Party within Russia was not yet strong enough to organize and lead the movement. Lenin himself did not seem to believe in its chances

of success, though at the time of the mutiny on board the battleship *Potemkin* he considered that with better handling the affair might have been exploited to some advantage. In fact, after that incident Lenin sent one of his lieutenants back to Russia to see whether the Revolution could not, after all, be turned into the "real thing." But his original view proved to have been right.

At all events, after the defeat of the Revolution Lenin and his associates continued their preparation of the Revolution with undiminished energy, and with the same relentless efficiency that had always characterized Lenin's activities.

#### "CONSTITUTIONAL" GOVERNMENT

The first Duma—a representative assembly—went to work to carry out the Tsar's promise and introduce political and social reforms. But this did not please the Tsar and he dissolved it. The second Duma met in February, 1907, but this time it proved to be still more radical. It was dissolved on June 3, and the same day a law limiting the suffrage was published, the Tsar's idea being to limit opposition to his will. The third Duma was convened in the autumn of 1907 and did, indeed, prove to be "amenable to reason." The go-between between the Duma and the reactionary Government and bureaucracy was Stolypin, the head of the Council of Ministers. Stolypin was a man of ability and great personal charm, but under his rule, and despite the Duma, Russia was just as much a land of misery, oppression and murderous

persecution as it had been before the Revolution. Still he was just a shade less reactionary than the rest of the Government and the bureaucracy, and he was able to carry on with the Duma. After his assassination in Kiev (1911) the Government openly clashed with the Duma, and the fourth Duma (1912) was just a willing tool in its hands. So Russia was back where she had been before the war with Japan.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE END OF TSARISM AND THE RISE OF SOVIET RUSSIA

It was in these circumstances that Russia entered the war in 1914. The Tsarist Government was still strong enough for the purpose, though the country was once again on the verge of revolution. Even in July, 1914, there were street demonstrations in St. Petersburg and fights with the police and military, and there were also other similar conflicts raging elsewhere.

The origins of the war of 1914 are too well known to need reiterating here. As far as Russia was concerned it was a matter of Austro-German expansion in the Balkans. Perhaps the Tsarist Government was helped by a wave of patriotism, the kind that can always be fostered among a backward people in times of crisis. At all events, in the course of the succeeding two years Russia mobilized no fewer than nineteen million men, for whom she had no proper equipment, not only on account of her low degree of industrialization and lack of raw materials, but also on account of the kind of corruption in high places indicated above.

The Russian armies, despite the heroism of the common soldier, suffered defeats on a stupendous scale almost from the first. They were inadequately armed, were led by incompetent generals, and not infrequently they were also starving. At home there was famine and unrest. The requisitionings of food and draught animals in the rural areas affected the towns as much as the villages. Russia had been wretchedly, inhumanly poor before the war; now she was being bled white, she was being destroyed by her own corrupt, incompetent rulers, whose moral level was accurately represented by the monk Rasputin who virtually ruled the country through his hold on the Tsar and Tsarina.

The revolution that was to end Tsarism for ever really began early in the war. In the year 1915 there were nearly 1,000 strikes in Russia. In October, 1916, the workers of Petrograd (as it was then called) organized a huge political strike and even succeeded in winning a regiment of soldiers over to their side. That was symptomatic. There was then already a spirit of revolt taking root in the Army and Navy, partly owing to skilful Bolshevik propaganda, but chiefly to defeat and sheer intolerable suffering.

#### THE BOURGEOIS REVOLUTION

By February, 1917, there were strikes, demonstrations and armed uprisings in Petrograd. The usual measures of suppression failed, for the simple reason that the soldiers after a time went over to the workers. On February 28 Tsarism was over-

thrown and the Tsarist Ministers were arrested. News of the Petrograd events spread rapidly to the rest of the country and the various fronts and produced an immediate effect. Nicholas II at this time was away at the front and his formal abdication, in favour of his brother, Grand Duke Michael, occurred at Pskov (March 2).

Meanwhile, Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies had been formed. This meant that the workers were now allied with the peasants, for, of course, the great majority of the soldiers were recruited from among the peasantry. The Duma, on its part, elected an Executive Committee under Rodzianko, Speaker of the Duma. These two bodies came to an agreement and established a Provisional Government, with Prince Lvov as Prime Minister. This Ministry was immediately recognized throughout the country. The Tsar and his family were arrested, for a time kept in Tsarskoe Selo, but later sent to Siberia.

Lvov was followed by Kerensky and for a time it seemed as though Russia would continue the war on the side of the Allies. However, in the spring, at the initiative of the Petrograd Soviet, an All-Russian Soviet Congress was held which decided to fight the Government and stop the war. The Bolsheviks were more strongly represented at this Congress than in the first Petrograd Soviet, which was largely Menshevik and quite prepared to collaborate with the bourgeoisie. In July the Bolshevik groups made an attempt to seize power, but failed. The Government defeated the attempt with the

aid of the so-called junkers (cadets) and other bourgeois elements. In August General Kornilov, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, marched on Petrograd with a force of Cossacks and sent an ultimatum to Kerensky to place the government of the country under military control. However, Kornilov's army was met by Bolshevik propagandists and refused to attack. Kerensky had Kornilov arrested and charged with treason.

### THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION

By this time, of course, Lenin had been back in Russia for some months, and it was he, together with his associates—Trotsky, Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and others, who were in charge of Bolshevik activities. After the July rising Kerensky issued orders for the arrest of Lenin, so he went into hiding. It was as a fugitive that he directed the preparations for a fresh rising, which took place on October 25 (November 7, according to the Gregorian calendar).

The Bolsheviks were assisted by the sailors of Kronstadt who, among other things, brought a cruiser up the River Neva and bombarded the Winter Palace. This time the Bolsheviks were successful. Kerensky fled. His Ministers were arrested. Lenin proceeded to call a second All-Russian Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and this confirmed his first three decrees, those on Peace, Land, and State Power. The first called on all the belligerent countries to start negotiations for peace immediately. The



second abolished the private ownership of land. The third vested all power in the Soviets.

Thus Russia became a Soviet Republic.

The Congress elected a Central Executive Committee and a Council of People's Commissars, at the head of which was Lenin himself. Trotsky became Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Stalin Commissar for Nationalities.

During the succeeding months the Soviet Government was faced with a situation that contained almost all the difficulties of which it is possible to conceive and all the elements of swift failure. There was dissension in the Government itself on the questions of peace and collaboration with other, more moderate parties. There was active opposition from industrialists, the bourgeoisie in general, the Mensheviks, and even the peasantry—for the towns needed food and the peasants were unwilling to part with any and in any case they had little to part with. The front was disintegrating after the senseless butchery caused by the Brusilov offensive launched upon the orders of the Kerensky Government, and hundreds of thousands of soldiers, hungry and ragged, were moving upon the hungry cities. And all the time the Germans were advancing. It would be difficult to imagine a more desperate, a more hopeless situation for any government and, indeed, the enemies of Bolshevism both inside and outside Russia were convinced that Lenin would fail and Bolshevism would vanish from the scene within days, or at any rate weeks.

**GERMAN TREACHERY**

Yet this was not to be all. When Trotsky rejected the atrocious German peace terms at Brest-Litovsk, the Germans occupied more Russian territory and the Finnish counter-revolution, with German aid, began an advance on Petrograd. And when Trotsky finally did accept the German terms, the Germans proceeded to occupy still more Russian territory, including the Ukraine, the Crimea and Georgia.

**ENTENTE INTERVENTION**

In addition, the Czechoslovak prisoners of war in Russia started a counter-revolutionary movement with the aid of France and seized part of the Volga region, the Urals and Siberia. In the summer of 1918, British troops landed in Archangel. The Japanese landed in Vladivostok, and but for fear of the United States would have gone much further. Foreign troops were operating in Central Asia and in the region of Baku, as well as in Khiva and Bokhara. Then there were the various White Armies, attacking from all sides, killing, burning, raping, pillaging. There was General Kolchak in Siberia. Members of the upper classes flocked to his standard, while the Entente gave him money and arms. In the spring of 1919 Kolchak, having scored certain successes the previous year, launched an attack on the Soviet. General Denikin was marching to Kolchak's assistance from the south. In the west, Petrograd was threatened by General Yudenich.

In brief, Soviet Russia was being eviscerated from within and torn to pieces from without; and she was poor and exhausted—with the poverty and exhaustion not only of the previous few years, but of decades and centuries. And in those circumstances the Soviet Government not only managed to survive, but also created a strong Red Army, strong enough to defeat—with the aid of workers' and peasants' guerillas—all her enemies, both internal and external. The man who figured as the creator of the Red Army was Trotsky, but the spirit behind it—and the spirit that overcame all the other terrible handicaps—was the spirit of the Russian people.

#### DEFEAT OF WHITE GENERALS

Kolchak was defeated in the autumn of 1919, captured and shot. Also, in the autumn of 1919, the Reds dealt with the Denikin who at one time threatened Moscow itself, having occupied large areas on the Don and in the Ukraine (the Germans having evacuated these territories after the German Revolution). The heroes of this struggle were Stalin and Budyonny. Yudenich, at the same period, was marching on Petrograd. He, too, was supported by Russia's former Allies, but was nevertheless crushingly defeated and driven as far as the Esthonian frontier. Curiously enough, the only substantial aid the Red Army received in its struggles with the various White armies was from the White generals themselves, all of whom allowed their troops to indulge in the most horrible orgies of

murder and pillage in the territories they occupied or traversed, so that the Whites exhausted a great deal of their energy in these sadistic activities. It is certain that this was an important factor in the final triumph of the Red Army.

The last of the White generals, Wrangel, who occupied the Crimea and parts of the Ukraine, was decisively dealt with in November, 1920. Wrangel, with the remnants of his forces, fled by sea. During 1920 the Soviet Government also carried on a war with Poland, which Lenin himself later described as a mistake. It was Lenin who stopped the conflict after the Red Army had suffered a reverse at the gates of Warsaw.

## CHAPTER XIV

### FORMATION OF THE U.S.S.R.—THE PERIOD OF RECONSTRUCTION

Russia was not entirely cleared of Whites and interventionists until 1922, but after the defeat of Wrangel the Red Army had only comparatively minor tasks to deal with in this direction, and the period of reconstruction may be counted from 1921, when war economy was coming to an end and planned economy became at least a possibility.

However, before we proceed to summarize the history of this period, which covers the two decades from 1921 until the German attack on Russia in 1941, we must call attention to two points that must not be overlooked if we are to arrive at a true estimate of the processes of Soviet Russian consolidation and their results, and at a true understanding of Soviet Russia's attitude in international affairs.

One of these points concerns the interpretation of the term history. During the Tsarist regime the history of Russia was largely the history of the dynasty, of its individual members, of the ruling caste ; it was the history of a number of individuals.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, and until approximately 1922, it still continued to be the history of individuals, at least to some extent. All the great events of those years were linked with the towering personalities of Lenin and Trotsky and their associates. But from 1922 the history of Russia became the history of the people—a change of tremendous importance. Personalities *as* personalities ceased to matter. Soviet Russia meant the Russian people, not Lenin or Stalin, not a group or even a Party, but just the mass of the nation, the worker, the peasant, the millions of men, women and children. The deification of Lenin and, later, Stalin, was never deliberately fostered; it arose not from any unworthy personal motives on the part of these men, but from the dire need of the people, at a time of transition, danger from within and without, heart-breaking toil and the most abject want, for some embodiment of hope. The banishment of Trotsky was not the culmination of a conflict for the succession between two individuals, but a conflict between two points of view that closely affected the destiny of the people. The actors in the drama were incidental; the play was more important than they.

Perhaps at this point it will be useful to give a summary of Trotsky's part in the Russian events of 1917-1926 and of his relations with the Bolsheviks before the Revolution. At the time of Trotsky's expulsion from Russia many people in this country were convinced that this "brilliant and devoted Bolshevik" had been elbowed out of

the seat of power by the "cunning Georgian," and some such idea still seems to linger in the minds of the uninformed. On the factual evidence, however, Stalin's treatment of Trotsky was more than justified. It is not generally known that Trotsky was always an "outsider" as far as Bolshevism was concerned and that he was not a Bolshevik at all. In the early years of the century he met Lenin in London and succeeded in impressing him, but during the following years, and right up to the time immediately preceding the Revolution, Trotsky was in violent conflict with Lenin and his party. He was always convinced that it would be impossible to make a successful revolution with the aid of the workers and peasants and, in fact, he was temperamentally incapable of collaborating with the class upon which Lenin and his adherents based all their hopes. At the same time, Lenin recognized Trotsky's ability and, after his return to Russia in the early part of 1917, accepted his assistance; but the conflict of views was still there and it was not until the end of July, after the failure of the first Bolshevik attempt to seize power, when Lenin was in hiding and Trotsky himself in prison, that the latter signified his adherence to the Bolshevik policy. Even then, however, as subsequent events proved, he had an ulterior motive, and brought with him a group of his followers for no other purpose than to disrupt the Bolshevik Party from within. His refusal to accept the first set of German terms at Brest Litovsk was against the wishes of Lenin, and while it gave him an

opportunity to score a sort of theatrical triumph, it gravely endangered the Revolution. The more realistic and far-sighted Bolsheviks realized that they must accept whatever terms the Germans chose to impose—at least for the moment. Trotsky's passive resistance might easily have meant the end of the Revolution. Trotsky's share in the creation of the Red Army was admittedly considerable, but has nevertheless been overrated. He was praised by Lenin himself for what he had accomplished, yet from the beginning of 1919 Lenin ceased to rely on him in military matters and turned to Stalin instead. Later, Trotsky's policy and activities gravely endangered the fruits of the Revolution once more. He insisted that it was impossible to establish Socialism in one country alone and wanted to concentrate the Soviet's energies and resources on revolutionizing the rest of the world. Stalin, on the other hand, was convinced that in a country of the extent of Russia, and with her vast riches, it was not only possible to establish Socialism, but also to make it impregnable to outside attack. The revolutionizing of the rest of Europe was a task for the future. The Bolshevik Party as a whole agreed with Stalin. No doubt, Trotsky was no less sincere than Stalin. But he was not the man to submit to "party discipline" and he began to build up an underground movement designed to overthrow Stalin and the Soviet Government. Stalin, well aware of Trotsky's brilliance and skill as a revolutionary, had no choice but to expel Trotsky and crush his movement.



It was not a personal matter on either side ; the two men were merely embodiments of two policies. The same applies to the various purges that have caused so much puzzlement and mystification abroad. To put it crudely, in Soviet Russia the leaders are not persons whose personal and domestic affairs are the subject of popular or world interest, whose marriages and deaths attract universal attention, or whose sons and daughters automatically acquire rank ; no, these leaders do not figure as persons at all, but solely and exclusively as living symbols of the will, the aspirations and, if you like, the hopes of the people. It is important to bear this in mind, and to understand that as far as Soviet Russia is concerned it is the people with whom both her enemies and friends have to reckon.

Another point that must be remembered is this, that Soviet Russia, from 1917 until 1941, was surrounded by enemies on all sides. Between 1917 and 1921, when it was still possible to hold that Soviet Russia, like Tsarist Russia, meant a group of people that had seized power, a political party whose removal was sufficient to change the character of the country, a minority that had imposed itself upon a temporarily helpless majority—when this was still a plausible view, the Powers sent men and arms to fight Bolshevism and to restore—what ? Perhaps the Powers had no clear idea as to whether they wanted to restore Tsarism ; but they had a very clear idea that they wanted to destroy Bolshevism. But even when it became obvious, through the utter defeat of both the internal enemies of Bolshevism

and the interventionists, that Bolshevik Russia was not a handful of Bolsheviks, but the mass of the Russian people, and when the Russian people settled down to clear away the ruins and build up a new world, she was still surrounded by enemies. The capitalist world did everything, either actively or passively, to hamper Soviet Russia in the great task upon which she had embarked. Soviet Russia was an outcast among the nations, the subject of a vast campaign of mendacious—often stupidly mendacious—propaganda, a country with which many other countries refused to resume diplomatic relations, and while foreign capitalists were eager to lend a defaulting Germany vast sums of money, the exchange of goods with Russia was rendered as difficult as possible. It is necessary to recall this, not in order to indulge in recriminations on behalf of Soviet Russia, but in order to grasp that much of what happened in Soviet Russia and much of what she has achieved and failed to achieve, and above all, her pre-war foreign policy, was due to an entirely justified fear of the capitalist countries of the world. It was this fear that caused Soviet Russia to devote a great deal of her energy and resources to rearmament; it was this feverish rearmament that made it impossible for her to make even greater advances in the field of economic and social reconstruction, miraculous though her achievements in this connection have been; and it was this combination of fear and strenuous effort that made ruthless repression of opposition inevitable.

Viewed from this angle, the German-Russian

Pact of 1939, becomes understandable. Soviet Russia had no reason whatever to believe in the goodwill of the Democratic Powers, but on the contrary many reasons to fear them. She had the choice between coming in on the side of the Democratic Powers against Germany and purchasing a period of respite to continue with her rearmament by concluding an agreement with Germany. She chose the latter, which was quite logical from her own point of view and, in the light of subsequent events, an act of wisdom from the point of view of civilization. Whether Soviet Russia would eventually have come into the war on the side of the Allies had Germany not attacked her, is to-day an academic question. But those who think that Soviet Russia would in any case have attacked Nazi Germany may choose whether they want to be in the best or in the worst company. For Mr. Winston Churchill, as First Lord of the Admiralty, expressed that view, in a broadcast speech, when the situation in connection with Soviet Russia's attitude looked blackest; and Hitler was certainly convinced that Soviet Russia would not allow him to "get away with it," otherwise he would have been content to rely on the German-Russian Pact, and would not have invaded Russia in June, 1941.

To return to the facts of Russia's recent history: The U.S.S.R. (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), as it is known to-day, was formed in 1922, at an All-Union Congress of Soviets held in Moscow, which became the capital instead of Petrograd.

The year 1921 found Russia in a situation of

extreme difficulty. The Red Army was still engaged in various conflicts and had to be fed. The industrial workers were called upon to work to the limit of their capacity and they, too, had to be fed. In these circumstances the peasantry as a whole, having gained possession of the land through the Revolution, were unwilling to support the Revolution with the products of the land and a resistance had grown up to the requisitioning of food which the Government had to carry on if the Red Army, as well as the industrial workers and the urban population in general was not to fail through starvation.

The peasants, backward and ignorant, and themselves living below subsistence level, did not understand the need for sacrificial support of the Revolution and there was a danger of serious unrest among them. In addition, industrial production was disastrously low. Wilful sabotage on the part of the big employers, both before and after nationalization of industry, had not been remedied by the assumption of management by workers' committees.

Lenin realized that the complete abolition of private enterprise was inconsistent with the existing conditions and, in the early part of 1921, he introduced his New Economic Policy (N.E.P.), whereby many restrictions were relaxed and private trading, with some limitations, was restored.

The first period of N.E.P. lasted until 1924, the year of Lenin's death. It brought no substantial improvement, partly because it began with a disastrous crop failure, and partly because Russian

industry was still working with the apparatus inherited from Tsarism. But the second period, extending to 1928, brought tremendous progress in all directions. There were several good harvests, and the productivity of industrial labour increased by leaps and bounds, until the production level of pre-war years was attained. The living standard of the workers was still necessarily low, yet far better than it had been for years. At the same time, N.E.P. was not without its disadvantages. One of them was the inevitable strengthening of the position of the *koulak*, the rich peasant who led the resistance of the village against the Government and who, during the years when the country was in the direst peril, slaughtered their cattle and sheep, and even their horses, in order to sabotage the Government's efforts. The *koulaks* were thus a menace not only to economic revival, but also to the Revolution itself and their elimination was a matter of life and death to Soviet Russia.

Real reconstruction began with the introduction of the First Five Year Plan (1928-1932) by Stalin; it was completed in four years. The slogan was industrialization and mechanization. The Plan provided for the collectivization of agriculture, the intensive exploitation of Russia's natural resources, as well as development of industrial labour power.

The results of the First Five Year Plan have been criticized by economists and other experts, the mistakes of the Soviet Government in connection with it have been minutely analyzed and

the confusions and failures involved in it have been frequently satirized. No doubt, there were many mistakes and much confusion, but the ultimate result was collectivization and mechanization of a considerable proportion of the agricultural areas, with a corresponding increase in food production; increased production of technical crops (cotton, etc.); increased production of coal, oil, steel, tractors and other machinery; and electrification on a large scale.

The colossal extent of the increase in industrial production may be gathered from the fact that whereas in 1927-1928 large-scale industry had been employing only a little over  $2\frac{1}{2}$  million workers, by 1933 the number had increased by nearly 10 $\frac{1}{2}$  millions. The stupendous problem of educating and training these workers to a normal level of skill had not been solved, but a solution was on the way—and from that time there was no unemployment in Soviet Russia.

The Second Five Year Plan—1933-1937—resulted in a vast improvement in the productivity of labour, continuous expansion of agricultural production, enormous increases in the production of raw materials, electrification, industrial and residential building and, in fact, in every field and sphere of activity.

Parallel with this rapid advance in material reconstruction there was a slow but steady improvement in the living standard of the mass of the people, while the cultural level was raised to an undreamt of plane by the introduction of universal education, whose degree in the case of any individual was

limited only by his ability or willingness to absorb it. Schools and libraries sprang up in tens of thousands. The theatre and the cinema became accessible to all. Literature, art and science were liberated from the fetters of money and became linked with ability and talent alone. Women, placed on a footing of equality with men from the first, were emancipated from the drudgery of the home, relieved of the avoidable burdens of motherhood, and enabled to have personal interests and careers of their own.

By the end of the Second Five Year Plan it could be said with certainty that the great social experiment represented by Soviet Russia had succeeded; that it had succeeded completely, brilliantly and beyond the expectations of both her friends and foes. Industrial progress was such that after 1937 some foreign experts were able to predict that within a generation Soviet Russia would be as powerful industrially as the rest of the world put together, while from the point of view of social advancement, the condition of the mass of the people in Russia will easily bear comparison—with very few reservations—with the condition of the mass of the people in any other country in the world.

The Soviet Union is still, in all essentials, a dictatorship; it is still largely governed by a bureaucracy; and the new democratic Constitution of 1936 does not operate in accordance with Western ideas. But we must remember, firstly, that up to the outbreak of the German-Russian war the Soviet Union was still in a period of transition; and secondly, that the Soviet Union never

had the slightest reason to conform to Western ideas; for according to "Western ideas" and intentions the Soviet Union would not exist and it is solely and exclusively due to "Russian ideas" that it does exist, and the Russian people are therefore entitled to live under a system that suits them, even if the West does not approve of every aspect of that system.

At all events, the Soviet experiment has succeeded, and the democratic world to-day has reason to be glad of that fact. Because it means that Soviet Russia is, indeed, the Russian people, the whole of the Russian people, and that the people are solidly united behind leaders who sprang from its own genius in the common struggle of civilized humanity against the new barbarism.



## CHAPTER XV

### FOREIGN POLICY 1921-1941

IN order to understand the circumstances that brought the Soviet Union into this struggle, and above all, the reasons that kept her out of it for nearly two years, it is necessary to survey the whole course of her relations with the rest of the world from the end of Allied intervention in Russia during and after the last war, until June, 1941, when she was attacked by Germany.

A bare recapitulation of the known facts will be sufficient to show that the Soviet Union was always on the side of peace and against Fascism and aggression, but that she was continually rebuffed and treated with contempt by the Western Powers. Indeed, by all the rules of political logic, and despite the Allied attempt to crush the Bolshevik Government, Russia was the natural ally of Britain and France, and it is abundantly clear to-day that insofar as her foreign policy immediately before and during part of the present war operated against the interests of the two great European democracies, it was rendered inevitable by their own conduct towards Russia. The barrier to an under-

standing was, of course, the Russian form of government. The capitalist countries all viewed Bolshevism with blind hatred and a no less blind fear, completely forgetting the plain historical lesson that no successful revolution was ever made by *revolutionaries* alone and that, for example, the Bolshevik Revolution owed its success primarily to the Tsars, the Grand Dukes and the Plehves, and only secondarily to Lenin and his associates.

The contemptuous treatment of the Soviet Union began with the peace negotiations after the conclusion of the last war. The Treaty of Versailles has been blamed for many evils, including the rise of Nazism in Germany. If that criticism is justified, then it must be admitted that one fundamental fault of the Treaty lay in the fact that the Soviet Union had no hand in the making of it. All the evidence goes to show that the Soviet leaders never had any illusions about Germany, Nazism or no Nazism. They seem to have understood that what Germany always wanted was not justice, but injustice—so long as she herself could be the perpetrator of the injustice; not equality with other nations, but inequality—so long as she herself could be top dog. Perhaps if Russia had been invited to Versailles the whole history of the last twenty years would have been different. But it did not occur to anyone to suggest that the Bolshevik Government ought to co-operate, although the Treaty imposed on their country far greater territorial losses than on Germany. It was Russia's absence from Versailles that deprived it of the

character of a world settlement. It was this, too, that deepened and perpetuated the antagonism between Russia and her natural allies and, on the other hand, drove her into the arms of her natural enemy, Germany.

It may be argued that at the time of Versailles there was at least one apparent justification for the belief that the Bolshevik Government could not last, that, at all events, the ruling classes in all countries of the world were firmly convinced that it would not survive for long.

But no such argument can be advanced in connection with the League of Nations, of which the Soviet Union did not become a member until 1934! It had become clear long before then that the Bolshevik Government was one of the most stable governments in the world and Russia's inclusion during the early years of the League would certainly have gone a long way to compensate for the absence of the United States. It might even have prevented the first great failure of the League in 1931, when Japan invaded Manchuria, an event which history will no doubt put down as the first fatal step towards the present world war. Russia was directly involved, for the invasion deprived her of a vital link in her Trans-Siberian trunk line, and had she then been a member of the League Japan might have been forced to withdraw.

But even after Russia had joined the League she was still treated as an outsider. She was not asked to participate in the Stresa Conference (1935) where the German threat to Austrian

independence was discussed. When she proposed collective security on the basis of the *status quo* she was unable to obtain any response, though Russia's sincerity could not have been in doubt, for the proposals meant that she was prepared to recognize the loss of territory imposed upon her by the Treaty of Versailles. Again, when Mussolini launched his Abyssinian adventure Russia was in favour of vigorous action, instead of futile "sanctions," but was frustrated by France, which was by then her ally. The alliance, in any case, was very half-hearted on the French side.

During the Spanish Civil War Russia was certainly not one of the countries that stood for the appeasement of Hitler and Mussolini, though in the end she considered that she had no choice but to adhere to the farcical policy of non-intervention. But even at the Non-Intervention Committee in London she was treated as an outsider—and by no means for the last time.

In March, 1938, Hitler invaded Austria. That was the first fruit of appeasement. Russia had no sympathy with the Austrian Government; it had murdered and jailed many of the workers, thereby destroying the only force that would have enabled it to oppose Hitler. But she was deeply interested in the consequences of this piece of international banditry, for Czechoslovakia was now almost completely encircled by Germany and Russia had taken that last European outpost of democracy into alliance in 1935. Everyone knew, after the occupation of Austria, that Czechoslovakia was

next on the list, despite all the lying assurances of Hitler.

The world had scarcely had time to make up its mind that the *Anschluss* was after all a natural development before Hitler launched his violent propaganda campaign against Czechoslovakia. He wanted the German-inhabited Sudetenland—that and nothing more. In May he carried out a surprise mobilization on the Czechoslovak frontier, but it was no surprise to the alert Czechs and they were ready, so, for the moment, Hitler held his hand. But the propaganda campaign went on with redoubled violence, rising to a crescendo of fury as the weeks passed. By the beginning of September the whole world—with the probable exception of Russia—had been frightened into the conviction that the madman of Berchtesgaden was ready to unleash the dogs of war. The world was also convinced that all the madman wanted was the Sudetenland, and nothing but the Sudetenland. Had he not himself declared that he had no further territorial claims in Europe? And had he not made it clear that he did not want any Czechs?

What followed is only too well known. Munich. Czechoslovakia herself was well armed and ready to resist aggression, though at the same time she was also willing to go to the very limit of concession. Russia expressly reaffirmed (September 23) her pledge to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia if France, the Republic's ally since 1923, did the same. A joint declaration by Britain, France

and Russia threatening war against Germany if she attacked Czechoslovakia might easily have changed the situation and saved Czechoslovakia. But no. Those who had the decisive voice in the matter preferred capitulation. The "settlement" was made without Czechoslovakia and without Russia. Hitler and Mussolini did not, like Bolshevik Russia, therefore the two democracies agreed that she should not be invited. Indeed, Russia in some respects was treated as if she did not exist.

In the circumstances it would not have been surprising if Russia had simply turned her back on the West. On the factual evidence, she had every reason to believe that Britain and France were at one with Nazi Germany in wanting to exclude Russia from European affairs.

Yet Russia did not sever her alliance with France, did not withdraw in disgust, but, instead, decided to wait. In March, 1939, her future attitude towards the democracies was decided for her by Hitler himself or, if you like, by the consequences of the errors of the democracies. In that month Hitler occupied Bohemia and Moravia and made them into a "Protectorate," in contemptuous disregard of the Anglo-French guarantee of what was left of Czechoslovakia after Munich. Britain and France could do nothing and Hitler now had under his control the thin end of the wedge of direct aggression against Russia. This was the wedge-shaped fragment of the Ukraine known as Carpathian Russia or Ruthenia. This province

had been entrusted to Czechoslovakia by the Treaty of Versailles. Now, Hitler was able to make it into a jumping-off ground for a movement of Ukrainian independence (that is, independence from Russia). In other words, possession of Carpathian Russia placed Hitler in a position to revive the German menace to the Ukraine, to take the first step towards the accomplishment of his declared programme to dismember Russia.

This alone was sufficient to cause Russia to cling to the hope of co-operation with her natural allies, France and Britain. The occupation by Hitler of the Lithuanian port of Memel, which followed immediately after the occupation of Czechoslovakia, had a similar effect. That, too, was a menace to Russia, as a glance at the map will show.

Unfortunately, Russia's willingness to co-operate again failed to find a proper response. Immediately after the rape of Czechoslovakia the Soviet Union proposed an immediate Six Power Conference at Bucarest, but this was rejected by Britain and France as "premature"! Instead, we proposed a joint declaration by Britain, France, Russia and Poland that if Germany attacked any other country they would "consult" as to what steps to take. To this Russia agreed, but the Poles were not satisfied, and on March 31 we gave a guarantee to Poland which, of course, already had an alliance with France. Later, we added unilateral guarantees to Greece and Rumania. We asked Russia to give similar guarantees to Poland and Rumania, to which Russia immediately replied

with a proposal for a Triple Alliance between Britain, France and Russia, a joint guarantee of Poland, the Baltic States and Rumania, and a military convention. This would have meant a re-creation of the alliance of 1914 and a strong warning to Hitler that an attack on Poland, against which the usual German propaganda campaign was already beginning, would immediately involve him in a two-front war. There was no reply to the Russian proposal for three weeks.

It was at this point that Molotov became Foreign Commissar. The Soviet Union considered that Litvinoff's policy of co-operation with the democracies had failed and that the interests of the country demanded a different orientation. It is not known precisely when the Russian negotiations with Germany began. What we know for certain, however, is that while the German propaganda campaign against Poland was rapidly gathering momentum, and while the people of Britain were anxiously awaiting news of an agreement between ourselves and Russia, the two democratic governments were doing very little to show an appreciation of the urgency of the situation and to speed up the of negotiations with Russia.

Was this due to insincerity on our part? Is it really true that we did not at any time want the Triple Alliance to come into being? All the evidence points the other way. For example, it was Britain that overcame the Polish objections to the military proposals of Russia. Poland, perhaps not unnaturally, did not want any Russian troops in her



territory, and her idea of Russian aid was confined to equipment, and it cannot have been an easy task to bring them round to the Russian point of view. But the fact remains that all our actions tended to create the impression that we were not in earnest, that, at any rate, we were not prepared to treat Russia as a Great Power should be treated.

The Russians made their proposal for a Triple Alliance on April 17. We replied on May 9, rejecting this and repeating our earlier proposal that Russia should give unilateral guarantees. The Russians replied within five days, on May 14. We sent other proposals on May 22 and finally, in the middle of June, we sent to Moscow a Foreign Office official, a man of recognized ability, but without any authority to give immediate answers or to speed up the negotiations in any way. And so the negotiations dragged on for another two months.

No doubt, the British Government must have had very good reasons for everything it did or failed to do. Whether they were indeed "good," only history can decide. But all the Russians saw was that we were slow in making up our minds on any point; that we had not considered it worth while to appoint either a diplomatic or a military mission with adequate powers; and that Poland was opposing the only effective form of military aid. And in view of the treatment Russia had received at the time of Munich, as well as before and after, it is not to be wondered at if she came to the conclusion that what we were really

after was to deflect Hitler's fury against herself, especially as she was well aware that Hitler had several times proposed to Poland a joint attack on Russia.

And so, on August 22, when the Polish objections had at last been overcome, Molotov announced to the British negotiators that he was that day expecting Ribbentrop, the German Foreign Minister, in Moscow to sign a Pact of non-aggression! The Pact was signed the following day and, of course, it made the war a certainty. The news came as a shock not only to the British people, but also to the Russian people.

However, the Pact did not and could not alter the fact that Germany was Russia's natural enemy, while we were her natural friends, and if we examine Russia's subsequent actions we shall see that they were governed by that principle.

The Russian invasion of Poland (September 17) has been described as "a stab in the back." Actually, it was nothing of the kind. It was an anti-German move that circumstances had rendered inevitable, for if Russia had allowed the Germans to overrun the whole of Poland, Germany would have established her rule over a large population that properly belonged to Russia and would thereby have increased her chances for a future attack on the Soviet Union. But apart from the political aspect who would dare to say, in the light of the bestial treatment of the population of the German-occupied territories, that it was not a blessing for the population of the other half of Poland to come under

Russian rule? In any case, it is doubtful whether the Poles could have resisted Germany much longer than they did but for the Russian move.

The occupation by Russia of the Baltic States was also ultimately directed against Germany and was similarly rendered inevitable by the existing circumstances. The creation of these semi-Fascist States barred Russia from the Baltic. After the defeat of Poland they were at the mercy of Germany, which would undoubtedly have occupied them had she not been anticipated by Russia. Clearly, this was a race between Germany and Russia, just as, earlier, there was a race between the German and Russian armies for the best strategic line further South. The Russians won, cutting off the Germans both from the Hungarian and Rumanian frontiers on that side, and blocking the way to the Ukraine and the Black Sea. Actually the Russians, on their own initiative, withdrew to a line that left them only with a small fraction of purely Polish population.

Much abuse has been heaped on the Soviet Union on account of her attack on Finland. Not only was Russia ejected from the League of Nations for this reason, but Britain and France actually made arrangements to come to the aid of the Finns, who were held up as a democratic people and as innocent victims of aggression. In actual fact, the move against Finland was an inevitable defensive move. Anyone who knows Finland and her recent history must admit that the Finns are a semi-Fascist and ardently pro-German nation.

Russia, in her far-sighted preparations for the German attack that she knew must come sooner or later, could not ignore this menace—the original Finnish frontier was only twenty miles from Leningrad. What would have happened if, at the time of the German attack on Russia in June, 1941, the Finland of 1938 had been intact? In the light of subsequent events this is an easy question to answer. Fortunately for us, our attempt to send military aid to the Finns failed and so, by the kindness of Fate, we just escaped forcing Russia into a full alliance with Germany against us.

However, quite apart from the military aspect, there is Russia's interpretation of her economic agreement with Germany to prove that she never intended to give any substantial support to her natural enemy. The Germans made great play with the quantities of grain, oil and other goods that they were going to receive from Russia. In actual fact, she received minimum instead of maximum deliveries. Precise data are not available, but it is known that Russia made the best use of her "transport difficulties" to withhold supplies from Germany. Logically, she could not have been particularly anxious to provide Germany with materials which she knew would at some time be used against herself.

The inevitability of hostilities between Germany and Russia, and alliance between ourselves and Russia, became clear beyond all doubt when Russia re-occupied Bessarabia and occupied part of the Bukovina. Here again she was endeavour-

ing to anticipate Germany. Hungary had ranged herself definitely on Germany's side, while the vassalization of Rumania was proceeding at a rapid pace. This, again, was a menace to the Ukraine and the Russian move was designed to counter it. Actually, the Russo-German war was already "on" when Russia occupied Bessarabia; when Russia sent a sharp note to Bulgaria (March, 1941) on the latter's submission to the New Order of the Axis; and when Russia concluded a pact of friendship with Yugoslavia.

Thus, it is not true to say that the only reason Russia has become our ally is that she was attacked by Germany and that but for that attack she would not be our ally. The fact is that this alliance was inevitable from the first and was bound to come into being in some form, for the simple reason that Russia has many interests in common with us, but none with Germany—and no diplomatic blunders or mere prejudices can alter that.

The same applies in connection with Japan. To-day, in March, 1942, Russia is not officially at war with Japan. Yet, as the future will show Russia is already our ally on that side as well.

What has happened at the German-Russian front since June, 1941, is well known. At first, many of Russia's friends shared Hitler's conviction that the Red Army would collapse in a few weeks, if not days. Some military experts in this country did not hesitate to predict that result in print. But the heroism of the Red Army and the iron resolve of the Russian people belied the expectations of

both friend and foe and for several months now they have kept the German hordes on the defensive. the Russian front has become the vital front against Hitler, the only front, at present, where he may be decisively defeated.

## CHAPTER XVI

### LITERATURE, SCIENCE, ART

IN the sphere of literature Soviet Russia in twenty years has made more progress than Tsarist Russia in all the centuries of its existence. It is not unfair to say that the great poets and writers produced by Soviet Russia include Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Gogol, Chekov, Turgenev and Gorky. For before the advent of Bolshevism these giants of Russian literature scarcely existed as far as 95 per cent of the Russian people were concerned. Apart from illiteracy, there was also the question of paying for the books and a large proportion even of the literate classes were too poor. To-day—and for many years past—all the old Russian authors, as well as the new, are accessible to the entire population. More books are published in the Soviet Union alone than in the entire rest of Europe and literature has changed from a close preserve of the few into a vast open prairie for nearly 200 million people. New writers, poets and dramatists are encouraged in every possible way and literary talent is not crushed by the burden of poverty, but on the contrary encouraged and assisted in

every possible way. If few Soviet authors are known abroad that does not mean that men of letters worthy of "export" are scarce, but is simply due to the reluctance of the rest of the world, until recently, to take an interest in "Bolshevik" literature. Even so, however, the works of Ilya Ehrenburg, Sholokov, Alexei Tolstoy, and some other Soviet novelists and dramatists, have been translated into a number of languages. And, in the case of Ehrenburg, at any rate, we are offered the surprising spectacle of a Soviet author satirizing Soviet life and institutions.

Soviet science was never "boycotted" to anything like the same extent as Soviet literature, partly because it was frequently in the news, and partly because, unlike literature, science cannot be "Bolshevik," that is, it cannot be biased and cannot be given a political orientation. Yet Soviet science *is* "Bolshevik" in the sense that Russian scientists are enabled by the State to devote themselves to science, instead of wasting the greater part of their talents and energies in obtaining sufficient money to be able to exercise those talents and energies. Also, Soviet science is "Bolshevik" in the sense that scientific research, both general and specific, is carried on on a colossal scale and is treated as a necessary and inevitable part of social organization.

In 1918 there were a little more than 200 research institutes in Russia. By 1938 the number had grown to 2,292. But this is not all, for scientific research is also proceeding on the farms



and in the factories—even the peasants have learned to experiment. In addition, the State has sent expeditions all over the world in search of new plants and new varieties of old plants. Botanical expeditions have visited, among other places, Persia, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Japan, Korea, India, Ceylon, Java, Mexico, all the South American countries, etc. \*Medical research (together with the development of the medical services) has been proceeding on a colossal scale in Soviet Russia for many years. The names of Soviet Arctic explorers—Schmidt, Golovin, Chkalov, Baidukov and many others—are known in scientific circles throughout the world.

The solicitude with which the Soviet State treats the scientist, has often been praised by foreign scientists who have been invited to work in Russia. In this respect at any rate it may soon be said that it is unfair to Western science to compare its achievements with Soviet science, from the path of which all obstacles have been removed.

It is the same with music, the theatre, the cinema, painting, sculpture and architecture.

Talent is encouraged, regardless of anything else, and the products of talent are made accessible to the mass of the people. In Tsarist times the Russian composers, Tchaikovsky, Moussorgsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Borodin, etc., were not even known by name to the overwhelming majority of Russians. It is under Soviet rule that they have become Russian national composers in the true sense of the word. \*Musical training is open to

any child with talent. The Russian film industry, more than any other, has raised the film to a powerful instrument of culture and, here again, the shackles of money have been thrown off, and talent alone counts on the producing, as well as on the histrionic side. The theatre, too, has been raised to a higher plane, and it is probably in Soviet Russia alone that the fate of a great play or the development of a great actor does not depend on theatre rents and box office receipts.

These, in brief, are some of the cultural achievements of Soviet Russia.

The material and cultural achievements of the Russian people are reflected in the Red Army—and therein lies the hope of civilization to-day. The soldiers of the Red Army are as well equipped mentally, morally and spiritually as they are in the military sense—and perhaps better. There is steel in their hearts as well as in their hands; and that constitutes a guarantee that their alliance with the other free peoples of the world will lead to the final destruction of the enemies of humanity, and will be a decisive factor in the re-building of Europe and the world after the victory.